D.I. Wright

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LABOUR COLONIAL POLICY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AFRICA BETWEEN 1918 AND 1939

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ABSTRACT

The Labour party's colonial policy, particularly towards Africa, has not been as extensively studied as its international or its domestic policy. However, colonial policy is important in indicating the nature of the Labour party in its formative years. This study is concerned to examine the development of the Labour party's policy towards the African colonies and to ascertain whether the Labour party kept its promises on colonial policy to try to ensure that Africa was governed in the interests of the Africans. An attempt will be made to ascertain how far the Labour party has achieved what might be expected to be the aims of a 'democratic socialist' party as far as colonial policy towards Africa is concerned. A study of the policy-making process for colonial policy also shows whether the Labour party's claim to be a democratic policy-forming body was true for all areas of policy. The main aim is to discover whether the Labour party's reputation for a positive colonial policy towards Africa is justified.

The interwar period is of particular interest because it was during this period that the Labour party developed into the main opposition party to the Conservative party and had its first experience of office. Before the First World War there was little serious discussion within the Labour party concerning the problem of the colonies, particularly the rights of the Africans. By the outbreak of the Second World War the African people were beginning to demand independence for themselves. It was during the interwar period that Britain had an opportunity to prepare the African colonial peoples for future independence by peaceful means. Although the Labour party was not in power

for most of this period, it did have the opportunity to show the African people whether it was determined to do all it could to press for their progress towards independence. It was during the interwar period that the Labour party had the main opportunity to develop a positive African colonial policy for implementation when it achieved power.

This study has concentrated on Labour party documents, parliamentary reports and papers, Cabinet papers, departmental papers and private papers. Attention has been paid to the Labour party's performance in Parliament because the Labour party committed itself to using Parliament as the main means of achieving political change. An attempt has been made to determine what effect the Labour party's decision to follow British constitutional practice had on the party's policies. Emphasis is also placed on the work of the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions which was mainly responsible for formulating the party's colonial policy towards Africa. The study begins with a brief discussion of the thinking of Labour party figures on the African colonies before the outbreak of the First World War to show that there was no coherent colonial policy before the First World War. The period after the war produced the first important statement on colonial policy prepared by the Crown Colonies Committee which was a forerunner of the A.C.I.Q. This policy was largely ignored by Thomas when he was Colonial Secretary. After the fall of the first Labour Government, the policy was restated by the A.C.I.Q., gaining official N.E.C. backing and international approval at the Commonwealth Labour Conference and the Labour and Socialist International. Lord Passfield, the second Labour Colonial Secretary, was not very determined to implement this policy,

much to the disappointment of the A.C.I.Q., although he did produce a White Paper on Native Policy and set up a Joint Committee on Closer Union. After the collapse of the Second Labour Government, the A.C.I.Q. again revised the colonial policy pamphlet which was discussed at the 1933 party conference. It also issued a pamphlet on the issues raised by the German and Italian claims for colonial territories. With the beginnings of industrialisation in Africa, the T.U.C. began to show interest in colonial affairs and set up a Colonial Advisory Committee, largely staffed by members of the A.C.I.Q. Labour colonial policy towards Africa was largely made by a small group of experts who were motivated by humanitarian concern for the Africans. The majority of the party showed little interest in colonial affairs.

The party did not study the complex issue of economic development in the African colonies in any detail. The Labour party did not achieve as much as it could have done to protect African interests in the interwar years, mainly because the leadership was unwilling to abandon traditional British assumptions about colonial policy. There was remarkably little development in the Labour party's African policy in the interwar years. The Labour party's failure to develop its colonial policy towards Africa during this period meant that it was ill-equipped to cope with the rapidly changing situation in Africa after the Second World War. The Labour party has a better reputation for helping the African people than is warranted by its performance in office. Those members of the party such as Wedgwood, Leys, Ross and later Brockway who did devote time and effort to trying to help the Africans were often ignored by the leadership when the party was in office. Creech Jones did make a more determined attempt to implement Labour's policy than Thomas or Passfield

but the policy was no longer appropriate in 1945 because the interwar years had been largely wasted.

C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION

A major problem with the Labour party is that references to 'socialism' in Labour party programmes and conference resolutions often bear little relation to what the party actually does in office. This disparity between principles and practice is a subject of continuing debate about the Labour party. One of the major problems in this debate is that there is not an agreed definition of 'socialism'. This is not surprising because there are considerable difficulties involved in trying to achieve an agreed definition of 'socialism'. A recent attempt was made by Parekh[1] who states that four principles distinguish 'socialism' from all other political doctrines. First, the recognition of man's sociality; second, social responsibility for the well-being of all members of society and a rejection of the doctrine of self-help; third, the extension of co-operation to all areas of life, particularly the economic; and, fourth, the idea of planning as an expression of man's conscious control of his resources and destiny. This assessment of 'socialism' cannot be taken as completely definitive. One of the main omissions is that there is no mention of equality, which writers such as Tawney[2] and Crosland[3] have argued that 'socialism' is about. This illustrates the difficulty of trying to tie 'socialism' down to a definite set of values or principles.

Berki[4] does not attempt to answer the question 'What is

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1. 'The Concept of Socialism' (London, 1975)
2. R.H. Tawney, 'The Acquisitive Society' (Fontana ed.,1966). Equality itself is a difficult concept. It can either mean complete equality or equality of opportunity.
3. A. Crosland, 'The Future of Socialism' (London, 1956)
4. R.N. Berki, 'Socialism' (London, 1975)

Socialism?' but states that it is not a single thing but a range, an area, an open texture.[1] It is not a coherent body of thought but a 'living contradiction'. It is a mixture of libertarianism, humanism, egalitarianism, moralism, rationalism, messianic elitism, patriotism and cosmopolitanism. From these values and beliefs, Berki identifies four main tendencies of 'socialism' which are prevalent in the world- egalitarianism, moralism, rationalism, and libertarianism. As Berki states, 'socialism' means different things to different people. The 'socialism' of the Soviet Marxist is not the same as that of the Western Social Democracy.

The concern of the present writer is not to discern the essence of 'socialism', for, as Berki points out, there are many different interpretations of 'socialism'. The point is to ascertain what, if anything, the Labour party has taken it to mean. Berki thinks that the British Labour party's 'socialism' is based on 'moralism'. The chief values of 'moralism' are, according to Berki, social justice, peace, co-operation and brotherhood. One of its main sources is Christianity. The main criticism of capitalist society is that capitalism inflicts misery and suffering on the very people who produce society's wealth. It sets man against man and extolls selfishness and mutual enmity in the guise of 'free competition'. The 'moralist socialist' believes that society should not try to amass more and more material wealth but should find contentment in redistributing the present amount of wealth. The aim of life should be to serve others to create a society where people work for each other rather than themselves. Tawney, an example of a

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1. D. Healey seems to favour this type of approach. 'I don't think that a systematic statement of socialist philosophy is possible or desirable. Socialism is essentially a sense of direction.''The Observer' 27 March 1977.

Christian socialist, stated that the aim of the Labour party was to 'extend those (democratic) principles from the sphere of civil and political rights, where, at present, they are nominally recognised, to that of economic and social organisation, where they are systematically and insolently defied.'[1]

It is an oversimplification to say that the Labour party was based upon one tendency of 'socialism' but the Labour party's conception of 'socialism' has owed a lot to a Christian desire to change society into one that is based on co-operation rather than competition. In 1906, a survey of Labour M.P.s found that 60 per cent of the respondents had been brought up in the nonconformist faith. The book that had influenced them most was the Bible. Marx was not among the most influential writers. By 1976, the influence of Marx had increased but Tawney, the Christian socialist, had an equal impact on Labour M.P.s.[2] As the 'Economist' puts it, 'Labour's philosophy has always been a British mixture of a little Marxism, some Methodism and much more muddle.'[3]

Labour's philosophy has always been rather muddled. Wedgwood Benn states the 'sources of inspiration' of the Labour movement have heen Christian socialism, Fabianism, Owenism, trade unionism, radical Liberalism, and, to a lesser extent, Marxism.[4] The main aim that emerges from these 'sources of inspiration' is to create social justice and co-operation in Britain. As well as its commitment to reforming society, the Labour party has had an equal

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1. R.H. Tawney, 'Equality' (London,1931)
2. J.Hall and J.Higgins, 'What Influences today's Labour M.P.s?', New Society 2 December 1976.
3. 'The Economist' 12 March 1977,p.17.
4. A.Wedgwood Benn, 'The Guardian', 13 December 1976.

commitment to the method of parliamentary democracy to achieve its reforms. As Shirley Williams says, 'the Labour party has always been as devoted to the method of democracy - progress by persuasion rather than compulsion - as to the objectives of socialism.'[1]

Miliband, D. Coates and D. Howell[2] have suggested that it is because the Labour party has been so attached to parliamentary politics that it has failed to carry out its promises to reform society. The main theme of these writers is that the Labour party has led socialists in Britain into a 'dead end' because its 'socialism' has been so muddled and reformist and because it has been completely attached to the parliamentary road. D. Coates thinks that the Labour party's 'socialism' is not rigorous enough. Coates believes that 'socialism' involves a qualitative transformation in human experience and a break for all time with the alienation of human experience and of human labour associated with capitalist modes of production and their associated class systems of domination. He believes that 'socialism' cannot be achieved without a total break from the system of free wage labour on which capitalism is built, and a dismantling of the system of property relations. Coates goes on to assess whether the Labour party has achieved its own version of 'socialism', let alone the Marxist version. He concludes that the Labour party's history shows that 'the central economic, social and political features of British capitalism have proved surprisingly immune to the impact of Labour in power.' His argument is that the Labour party 'is not only not a

1. S. Williams, 'The Guardian', 13 December 1976.
2. R. Miliband, 'Parliamentary Sodalism' (London, 1964), D. Coates 'The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism, (Cambridge, 1975), D. Howell 'British Social Democracy' (London, 1976).

revolutionary party but that it is not a successful reformist party either.' The main reason for this lack of success has been that the party has chosen to define 'socialism', even in its most radical periods as public ownership, state planning and welfare provision - a set of social changes that would be implemented by capturing the parliamentary state in open electoral battle. The problem, according to Coates, is that the party has always relied, in its pursuit of its notion of 'socialism', on the voluntary co-operation of the very social forces whose power and privileges it should be seeking to undermine. The party has attached too much importance to parliament. It has seen the parliamentary road as an alternative to a radicalised proletariat and the use of industrial power to achieve 'socialism'. By seeking to avoid the confrontation of classes, the parliamentary road to 'socialism' has led nowhere, not even to radical reform. The implication is that the Labour party has not achieved anything at all because it has chosen the parliamentary road and not adopted a 'Marxist version of socialism'. The implication is that the only way to achieve real reform is to adopt 'Marxist socialism' and abandon the parliamentary path to reform.

Another group of writers regard the Labour party in a different light. Barker, Beattie and McKibbin think that too much emphasis has been placed on 'socialism' in discussions about the Labour party. The Labour party, they argue, has never been a full-bloodied socialist party and should not be judged as one. They think that the Labour party did not set out to radically reform society but to redistribute some of the benefits of society. From this point of view, they argue that the Labour party has achieved

reasonable success.

Barker, McKibbin and Beattie argue that 'socialism' was only one of the elements which made up the British Labour party. The major influence on the Labour party was the trade union movement. McKibbin[1] believes that the political aims of the Labour party were essentially trade union ones. According to him, to accept the Labour party did not mean accepting 'socialism' but an intricate network of trade union loyalties.

Beattie thinks thattrade unionists and Labour politicians of the 1920s did not think of 'socialism as anything more than a vague long term aim of little relevance to immediate circumstances'.[2] This may have been true of Macdonald and most of the leadership in Parliament and the trade unions, but there were many in the Labour party who did see socialism as something more than a vague longing. Men like Cripps, Cole, Laski, Tawney and Lansbury did believe the task of the Labour party was to transform society into a more co-operative one. Barker[3] writes that to most Labour M.P.s socialism meant little more than a sensible development of liberal and progressive policies. This underestimates the influence of socialism on the Labour party. Without a theory of socialism, the Labour party would have remained little more than a trade union pressure group. The importance of socialism in the Labour party is proved by the fact that, as Rose[4] points out, the Labour party has never been able to throw off its socialists. The commitment to change society was shown when Gaitskell tried to persuade the party to abandon clause 4 of the constitution. Since 1918, the Labour party has regarded

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1. McKibbin, 'The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924 (Oxford, 1974).
2. A.J. Beattie, 'English Party Politics' (London, 1970)
3. R. Barker, 'Education and Politics' (Oxford, 1974)
4. R. Rose 'Problem of Party Government' (London, 1974)

socialism as one of its aims but its socialism has not been of the Marxist variety. It has tended to equate socialism with social justice and been dedicated to achieving it by the democratic method. Socialism has been one of the elements that make up the Labour party but not the only one. The Labour party has never been completely committed to socialism as its only goal.

McKibbin's conclusion is that, within its limits, the Labour party has had reasonable success, and 'if people object that it has not served the cause of socialism or even the 'true' interests of the working class the answer is that it was never designed to do so.'[1] This seems to be a debateable statement. The Labour party was not designed to serve the cause of Marxist socialism but it did aim to serve the cause of democratic socialism and it is doubtful, even within its limits, whether the party has had reasonable success. The Beattie, Barker, McKibbin school seem, in contrast to Miliband, Howell and Coates, to put too little emphasis on socialism. The Labour party was formed by a combination of trade unionists, politicians and socialists. Many of the trade unionists and politicians were also socialists. Many people have joined the Labour party because they saw it as a vehicle for changing society, and not just a means of protecting trade union interests. The Trade unions are a factor of very great importance in the Labour party, but the party has, since 1918, never been solely a trade union party.

According to Barker, the Labour party sought to distribute the benefits of the existing order, not to change it, but the writings of Tawney, Cole, Laski, Cripps and even Sidney and Beatrice Webb do indicate that they saw the task

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1. McKibbin, op.cit., p.247.

as to change society. There were, and are, many people within the Labour party who want to radically change society. To state that the Labour party did not exist to change society is leaving out a large part of the picture. There were some in the party who just wanted to distribute the benefits of the existing order but there were also others who thought in terms of total transformation. To ignore this section, or to state that it was of little importance, is to paint a false picture. 'Labour and the New Social Order' stated that 'the view of the Labour Party is that what has to be reconstructed after the war is not this or that Government Department, or this or that piece of social machinery; but so far as Britain is concerned, society itself.'[1]

Miliband, Coates, Howell et al. tend to judge the Labour party in terms of Marxist socialism which is unrealistic since the mainstream of the Labour party has never embraced Marxism (although some Labour figures such as Laski, Bevan, and, even Morrison, have been influenced by Marxist thought).[2] They tend to think that because the Labour party has not been a fully Marxist party, it has achieved nothing. The British Labour party has been much less influenced by Marxism than continental socialist parties. It has based its socialism on ethical rather than economic foundations. As Barker states, English socialism was vastly different from continental socialism because it was reformist and parliamentarisn. However, he seems to think that this meant that Labour M.P.s and Labour theorists did not want to see a radical change in society.

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1. Labour and the New Social Order, (The Labour Party, January 1918) p.5.
2. Wedgwood Benn, op.cit.

Barker, McKibbin, Beattie et al. seem to attach too little importance to the 'socialism' of the Labour party. Without some socialist commitment, the Labour party would have been a purely working class trade union party with very limited vision. Miliband et al. judge the Labour party by too rigorous a yardstick whereas Barker et al. judge the party by too loose a criterion. The fairest method is to judge the party by its own criterion of socialism and its own assessment of itself as a democratic socialist party.

The basic statement of the Labour party's approach to socialism is contained in the 1918 statement 'Labour and the New Social Order' and the 1918 constitution. Clause 4 of the constitution stated that the aim of the Labour party was 'to secure for the producers by hand or brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the Common Ownership of the Means of Production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.'[1] McKibbin argues that this statement was put in to differentiate the Labour party from the other political parties but was only intended for show.[2] This interpretation does not seem completely correct in the light of the furious arguments unleased when Gaitskell tried to dispense with clause 4. As Miliband writes, the 1918 documents, although rather ambiguous, would, if implemented, have made a vast difference to the character and texture of British society.[3] The documents' implementation would not have instituted a 'socialist society' in the Marxist sense where the guiding principle would have been 'from each according to his ability,

1. H. Pelling, 'A Short History of the Labour party' (3rd ed., London, 1968)p.44
2. McKibbin, op.cit.,pp.96-97.
3. Miliband, op.cit.,pp.61-62.

to each according to his need,'[1] but it would have made a radical change. It was because the 1918 programme and constitution held out a promise of large-scale reform and social justice that many intellectuals and socialists came to join the Labour party. Although the statements were partly rhetorical, since 1918 the Labour party has been known as a 'socialist' party. This use of the term 'socialist' would be taken by Marxists to be too loose a description, Miliband prefers to describe the 1918 statements as defining 'Labourism' not 'Socialism'.[2] However, the Labour party should be judged in terms of its efforts to achieve this type of society. It has always been firmly committed to the idea of 'social justice', and, should be judged in terms of whether it has achieved social justice and not whether it has installed a socialist utopia in Britain. Has the Labour party been a moderately successful reformist party or has it failed to achieve any significant reforms? The main aims of a democratic socialist party are to provide social justice at home and abroad. In domestic affairs this means a vast extension of welfare services and serious efforts to redistribute the wealth of the community by taxation and subsidies. It also involves making public ownership the dominant form of ownership. In foreign affairs, this means decolonization, disarmament, attempts to settle disputes by peaceful means and support for international organisations which have been set up to achieve that aim. Concerning the empire, Labour and the New Social Order stated that 'the Labour party stands for its maintenance and progressive development on the lines of local automony and 'Home Rule All Round',[3] and not on 'an enforced domination over subject nations, subject races or

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1. K. Marx, Selected Works, Vol.2 (Moscow, 1955)p.24
2. Miliband, op.cit.,pp.61-62.
3. pp.41-42

subject colonies'. This statement, like much of Labour party rhetoric, is rather vague. One aim of this thesis is to examine how the Labour party converted its aspirations about the African empire into reality.

There have been many studies of the Labour party's domestic and foreign policy but less attention has been given to the Labour party's record on colonial policy. There have been studies of the Labour party's record over India[1] and an overall study of the party's attitude to imperialism[2] but there has been little work on Africa, except Mower's[3] which is now dated. Histories of the Labour party have largely ignored colonial affairs. The Labour party's record however, has to be seen in terms of its colonial policy as well as its domestic and international policy. The party's record has to include a study of its colonial policy because although it was an issue which did not bring many electoral dividends, it was a very important long term problem. A party which wanted to change society to make it socially fair and just should also have been concerned with the problems of the underdeveloped colonies. It should have made a vigorous effort to advance the colonies to independence with a chance of developing their natural resources. If the Labour party was more than a trade union party, one would have expected some concern with the problems of Britain's colonies. If the Labour party was concerned with social justice at home, it should also have been concerned with achieving social justice in the colonies. Social justice at home could not be based upon exploitation

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1. G. Fischer, The Labour Party and India,(Paris,1966).
2. P.S. Gupta, Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, Cambridge, 1975.
3. J.H. Mower, 'The Development of the Colonial Policy of the British Labour Party 1918-1939 (unpub. Ph.D.thesis Harvard, 1951).

abroad, as MacDonald wrote, in 'Labour and the Empire'.[1]

Colonial policy is also important because the conventional opinion is that the Labour party has a good record on colonial policy. Ivor Richard, the Labour Government's chairman, of the unsuccessful Geneva conference on independence for Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, stated, to the African delegates, that the Labour party has always tried to help the Africans and has a good record on colonial policy.[2] This thesis will make a detailed study of the Labour party's colonial policy towards Africa between the wars to see how far this assessment is borne out. The interwar period is chosen because less work has been done on this period than on the postwar period. There have been many studies of decolonization after the second world war but few studies of the development of the Labour party's colonial policy towards Africa. The interwar period is also particularly suitable for study because full documentation is available.

The main works that have been written relating to this period are those by Mower and Gupta. Mower's work was finished in 1951 and was written without the benefit of Cabinet or private papers which now enable a fuller picture to be built up. Gupta's work is a comprehensive survey of the Labour party's imperial policy. He is testing Lenin's thesis that the absence of revolutionary ardour in Western socialist parties, particularly Britain, was directly linked with imperialism. The idea being that the 'labour aristocracy' was 'bought off' by the 'ruling class' with the fruits of the Empire. Lenin believed that the existence of the empire enabled the 'capitalists' to exploit and develop the empire. This enabled them to make concessions to the

1. See pp. 44-46.
2. Sunday Times, 31 October, 1976.

workers in Britain. However, Gupta concludes that the British workers could hardly be described as living off 'the fact of exploited colonial workers', and 'in the final analysis reformist social democracy neither needed nor could afford an imperialist policy'.[1] The Labour party had enough to do trying to create a 'near-self-sufficient socialist Britain' and became primarily concerned with 'remedying the sense of relative deprivation from which the working classes... suffered vis-a-vis the middle and upper classes.'[2] It may be true that reformist social democracy did not need an 'imperialist policy' for preserving the empire, but the Labour party certainly did need to have a policy for the colonies. The colonial empire could not be ignored, some policy had to be worked out for it, even if it was one of abandonment. Even the policy of abandonment would have required some sort of timetable. Gupta seems to conclude that the Labour party abandoned thinking about the colonies to concentrate on building a 'socialist Britain', implying that the Labour party abandoned any great effort at social reform in the colonies to concentrate on social reform at home. This thesis will try to test whether this is so, whether the Labour party had a more radical approach to domestic than colonial affairs, or, whether the policies pursued in these areas were linked. Did the Labour party become a different type of party when it was considering the colonies from the type of party it was when it was considering domestic issues?

The main aim of this thesis will be to try to shed light on the nature of the Labour party by studying one particular area in detail. The Labour party's policy towards the colonies will not be judged against a Marxist

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1. Gupta, op.cit., pp.387-391.
2. ibid.

definition of socialism but against the Labour party's own statements of its aims. The aim was to achieve large-scale social reform at home and abroad in the colonies. As 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy' put it: "At home Labour is attempting to substitute a system of equal economic opportunity and industrial democracy for a system based upon the economic exploitation of the worker by the capitalist. In Africa, the policy of Labour must follow the same lines; it must aim at substituting a system based on the common economic interest of the inhabitants for the existing system based on the economic exploitation of the native by the white man."[1] An attempt will be made to assess whether the Labour party has been successful within its limits, or, whether it has failed to achieve its own aims. The main questions to be asked will be: what were the main influences on the Labour party's colonial policy? Did the Labour party make much effort to implement the policy when in office? If it was not very successful, was this due to its minority position between the wars or was it due to a lack of will? Did the Labour party have anything distinctive to say on colonial policy or was its policy following in the tradition of Conservative and Liberal colonial policy? Which body in the Labour party played the most important part in determining the party's colonial policy? Was the policy democratically determined? Did the party take a lead in trying to educate the British people into an understanding of the problems of Africa or did it follow the apathy of the British people on this subject? Did the party ignore the issue because it was not of immediate electoral importance or was the party farsighted enough to prepare a radical colonial policy which it was ready to implement, if given the chance? What does a study of colonial

1. 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy' (The Labour Party, 1920)pp.2-3.

policy show about the nature of the Labour party? Is it true, as Coates implies, that the Labour party has been a failure as a reforming party, or, is McKibbin right, when he says it has been successful within its limits? An attempt will be made to discover how far the Labour party's reputation for a progressive colonial policy is justified, and, whether its colonial policy was linked with its domestic policy. The main aim will be to determine whether the Labour party made a reasonable effort to secure for the indigenous peoples of the African colonies 'the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration...' The aim will be to ascertain whether the Labour party made an attempt to implement these principles in the colonies, or whether its policy was based upon expediency.

NOTES ON THE SITUATION IN AFRICA

A word must be said about the state of Britain's Dependencies in Africa during this period. The Dependencies were classified as colonies, protectorates, and mandated territories. A Colony was a British territory inhabited by British subjects. A protectorate was technically a foreign territory. The African inhabitants did not enjoy the rights of British subjects but were "British protected persons". Mandated Territories were former colonies of the countries which had been defeated in 1918. They had been confiscated after the war and handed over to the League of Nations which then gave them to the victorious powers to administer as 'a sacred trust of civilisation' as they were 'inhabited by people not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world'. African self-government was the ultimate objective of 'trusteeship'.

Britain's colonies and protectorates in West Africa were Nigeria, the Gold Coast (with Ashanti and Northern Territories), Sierra Leone (crown colony and protectorate) and Gambia. In East Africa there were Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar, Somaliland and Nyasaland. Northern Rhodesia was a protectorate in the Southern part of Africa. Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Basutoland were protectorates which were heavily dependent on South Africa. Britain's mandated territories were British Cameroons, Togoland and Tanganyika. Southern Rhodesia was also a British colony but it was given a large measure of self-government in 1923. Bechuanaland, Swaziland, Basutoland and Southern Rhodesia were the concern of the Dominions Office.

The other Dependencies were administered by officials responsible to the Secretaryof State for the Colonies in Britain.
The Secretary of State was responsible to his

colleagues in the Cabinet and to the U.K. Parliament for colonial policy, colonial administration and for every official act of his subordinates in the Colonial Office and the Colonial Service. The Secretary of State had the legal authority to legislate for the colonies without consulting Parliament in advance. This power became less important as local legislative structures developed but the Secretary of State had the power to veto local legislation. This was rarely necessary because there was usually an official majority in the Legislative Councils.

The Secretary of State had no direct executive authority in the colonies, but his power was exercised by the Governor (or Commissioner or High Commissioner in a protectorate). The Governor set up an Executive Council which included officials and often nominated or elected members of the Legislative Council, the practice varying in different colonies. The Governor had to consult the Executive Council except in emergencies. If he rejected the advice of his Council he had to report the circumstances to the Secretary of State.

The membership of the Legislative Council varied between the dependencies. Each contained representatives of the main interest groups which existed in the local community - agriculture, commerce and missions - and the main heads of government departments who constituted the majority. In East Africa, Africans were indirectly represented by Europeans, usually missionaries. Unofficial members were usually nominated but in Kenya they were elected. The Legislative Council in Kenya consisted of the Governor, twenty official members, eleven elected Europeans, five Indians, one Arab, and, one white man to represent the

interests of over two and a half million Africans.If the unofficial members of a Legislative Council were resolutely opposed to a bill put forward by the Governor,he would usually consult the Secretary of State before using the official majority to pass the measure.

In West Africa,the system varied. In I9I8,some West African Dependencies did not have Legislative Councils but in most countries these developed during the interwar period. The Gold Coast had the most developed system. By the thirties the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast consisted of fifteen officials,five nominated Europeans,three representatives of town Africans and six Chiefs. Although Africans did appear on the councils in West Africa,they were heavily outnumbered by white officials and representatives.

In West Africa and Tanganyika a system of 'indirect rule' was used to administer the territories.The leading advocates of this policy were Lord Lugard[I] and Sir Donald Cameron.[2] The basic idea of the policy was that use should be made of the indigenous institutions to administer the colonial territories.This meant that the African chiefs and councils should help the colonial administration by collecting taxes and administering justice. The advantage of this policy was that it reduced costs and the number of white administrators needed. The hope was that by using 'indirect rule' the Africans would be trained in local self-government and that this would serve as a basis for political advance in the future. One of the main questions of debate during this period was whether 'indirect rule' would help or hinder eventual African self-government.Some thought it would

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I.Governor of Hong Kong, I907-I2; Governor of Nigeria,I9I2-I9.
2.Governor of Tanganyika, I925-3I; Governor of Nigeria,I93I-35.

provide useful training in self-government but others thought it gave too much power to the African chiefs and tribal authorities who acted as a restraining influence on the development of the young Africans. Some argued that for the African colonies to take their place in the modern world it was necessary to break with old tribal customs and traditions whereas 'indirect rule' made this more difficult.

Most people in Britain, if they thought about the colonial empire at all, thought that there was no likelihood of the Africans ruling themselves for many generations to come. Most politicians whether Conservative, Liberal or Labour, regarded the Africans as children who would have to wait until they were 'grown up' before they could take part in the discussion about what policy should be pursued in Africa. African political consciousness was not very highly developed during the interwar period. Although African political organisations did begin to develop in Kenya in the twenties - the Kikuya Central Association and the North Kavirondo Taypayers Welfare Association, they did not have very much effect on events. Archdeacon Owen, a white man, was the driving force behind the N.K.T.W.A. When Kenyatta of the K.C.A. came to London in 1930 to present evidence to the Joint Committee on Closer Union in East Africa, the committee refused to hear him, although it did listen to the evidence of 'approved' African witnesses.

Between the wars there were hardly any Africans in positions of real responsibility in their own countries. It was a period when all important initiatives in Africa were taken by Europeans but a few Africans did begin to emerge from schools and colleges and they began to develop African opinion during the Second World War and after. However, for most of the interwar period African opinion was not very

clearly developed and was not paid much attention to by the British politicians. As a result of this, the thesis is mainly concerned with discussions between the politicians and the parties in London.

The major area of controversy between the parties during this period was over the question of Kenya where the white settlers wanted 'self-government' by which they meant that they should rule the whole territory, including the Africans, without interference from London. The question of Kenya dominated discussion about colonial policy in the Labour party, particularly in the twenties when the other territories were largely ignored. Kenya is discussed more than the other colonies because it was the main preoccupation of the Labour party's African experts during this period.

The indigenous peoples of African colonies and protectorates were referred to as 'natives' in contemporary discussion during the inter-war years. Throughout this work they are referred to as 'Africans' unless quotations, direct or indirect speech is used.

CHAPTER 1.

THE BOER WAR AND AFTER

Before the first world war the Labour party devoted little time to international and imperial problems. Leonard Woolf comments that the rank and file were naturally concerned with the industrial and economic aspects of politics of which their knowledge and interest made them acutely aware and 'even their middle class leaders and instructors like the Webbs, before the 1914 war ignored and were ignorant of international and imperial problems.'[1]

The major occasion when the Labour Movement was forced to consider imperial questions was the Boer war. The reactions among the heterogeneous organisations which federated to form the Labour Representation Committee were various. The war was popular with the majority of trade unionists.[2] Robert Blatchford, a socialist writer, also supported it in his paper 'The Clarion'. He warned that 'socialists had better understand that they could not have it both ways: they must either be willing to give up their colonies or to fight for them. To give them up would be difficult and dangerous to us and not good for the colonies.'[3] The Fabians were also inclined to support the war. However, the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. came out strongly against the war and gained unpopularity because of their pro-Boer stance.

The leaders of the Fabian society, Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw, supported the war. They were joined in their support by the majority of the Fabian Society but there were Fabians who were against the war. Sydney Olivier, about to leave to become the Governor of Jamaica, wrote to the Fabian Society to say that if it kept silent on the major issue of the Boer war, it would proclaim itself nothing more than a

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1. L. Woolf 'Downhill All the Way' (Hogarth Press, 1967),p.219.
2. F. Bealey, 'Les Travaillistes et la Guerre des Boers', Mouvement Social, December 1963, 45, pp.39-70.
3. Clarion, 21 October 1899, p.332 quoted B. Semmel 'Imperialism and Social Reform', (London,1960)p.226.

'Hutchinson Trust Annexe'.[1] The pro-war members of the Society were content to avoid making any pronouncement on the war; it was the pro-Boer members who pressed for the Society to issue a pamphlet on the war. The Fabians were still hoping to influence the two main parties and Sidney Webb did not want to antagonise the imperial wing of the Liberal party which he thought would be the most likely executors of the Fabians' domestic programme. Beatrice Webb wrote in her diary that 'Sidney is pro-Boer in sentiment; but he agrees with Asquith and Haldane, by reason; but he has not thought out the question, he has paid little or no attention to it.'[2] In a subsequent entry, she quoted Bernard Shaw as having advised the Webbs to 'plunge in with Rosebery as the best chance of moulding home policy.'[3]

The leader of the section of the Fabian Society trying to persuade the Executive to issue a statement of opposition to the war was S.G. Hobson. He declared that the war was the responsibility of the British governing classes and it was imperative that the Fabian Society should dissociate itself from 'the imperialism of capitalism andvain glorious nationalism.' Shaw put forward an amendment which seemed to assume that the war against the Boers should be carried to a successful conclusion. The amendment went on to recommend to the British government the policy which it should pursue after it had achieved victory. This amendment of Shaw's was decisively rejected by 58 votes to 27 despite support from members of the Executive. Hobson's motion also failed to

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1. M. Cole 'The Story of Fabian Socialism' (London, 1961)
2. B. Webb, 'Our Partnership' pp.217-20 (ed. B. Drake and M.I. Cole, 1948).
3. ibid.

pass, the motion for the previous question was carried instead by a vote of 59 to 50.[1] The meeting ended in uncertainty with no decision having been taken. However, Ramsay MacDonald, a member of the Fabian Executive, managed to persuade them to take the sense of the membership on the question by a postal referendum.[2] To the amusement of the press, the question asked was not 'is the war right or wrong?' but 'are you in favour of an official announcement being made by the Fabian Society on Imperialism in relation to the war?' It was generally assumed that a vote for a pronouncement was an anti-imperialist pronouncement and eight urged against it. The result of the vote was 217 in favour of a declaration and 259 against it. Accordingly, no immediate announcement was made by the Society on the war.

This inaction on the part of the Fabian Society led 18 members who felt very strongly about the South Africa war to resign from the party, including J. Ramsay MacDonald, two trade union leaders, G.N. Barnes and Peter Curran, Walter Crane, an associate of William Morris, and Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst. The issue at question had really been imperialism versus anti-imperialism, although strictly speaking, the Society had only voted in favour of not making a pronouncement against imperialism. However, Shaw had tried to persuade the Society that 'a Fabian is necessarily an imperialist'. A link was being formed between the Webbs and Lord Rosebery.[3] The victory of the imperialists was confirmed when elections were held for the National Executive. Not a single member of the eight man majority which had opposed an anti-imperialist announcement lost his seat.

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1. A.M. McBriar, 'Fabian Socialism and English Politics' (Cambridge, 1962), pp.121-3. B. Porter, 'Critics of Empire' (Macmillan, 1968), p.110
2. D. Marquand 'Ramsay MacDonald' (London, 1977) p.66.
3. B. Porter, op.cit., p.124, B. Webb, 'Our Partnership', op.cit., p.198.

The new Executive did, however, decide that a pamphlet should be issued setting out the Fabian attitude to the war. Bernard Shaw prepared the first draft, the proofs of which were sent out to every member for correction and amendment. However, Shaw managed to incorporate his own view into the collective tract despite the large minority of anti-imperialists in the society.[1]

'Fabianism and the Empire'[2] was the first major statement by the Fabian Society concerning foreign and imperial affairs. It claimed that imperialism was the new stage of the international policy and the issue was whether Britain would remain at the centre of one of the world-empires of the future or whether she would rashly lose all her colonies and be reduced to the status of a small island. Shaw accepted imperial domination as a necessity and stipulated that the domination should be efficient and sensible. He thought that a great power would 'consciously or unconsciously' govern in the interests of civilisation as a whole and it was not in that interest that goldfields and the formidable armaments which could be built upon them should be wielded irresponsibly by small communities of frontiersman. The value of a state lay in the quality of its civilisation. A state which obstructed international civilisation would have to go whether it was big or small. As McBriar writes, 'the Fabians not only recognised that the world was being divided up amongst the Imperialist powers, but in a general way they approved and justified the tendency.'[3]

However, Fabian imperialism was not jingoism. The empire which the Fabians wished to see was different from that which the Conservatives were building. It was to be 'socialistic' in the Fabian sense which meant 'the effective social organisation of the whole Empire and its rescue from the strife

1. McBriar, op.cit., p.125.
2. 'Fabianism and the Empire', ed.G.B. Shaw (The Fabian Society, 1900)
3. McBriar, op.cit.,p.217.

of classes and private interests.'[1] When the war was over imperial officials not subject to local parliamentary authority should enforce fair standards of life in the South Africa mines for whites and coloured alike. The pamphlet concluded that in order to keep the Empire intact there should be a thorough review of the consular system. It was also suggested that the factory act should be amended to extend the age for half-time employment to 21, in order to leave more time for drills and military training to defend the empire. This was the extraordinary conclusion of an extraordinary 'socialist' pamphlet. The ideal portrayed seemed to be government from enlighted Britain of the Empire. The Fabians would ensure that Britain forced 'socialism' on the uncivilised nations of the world. The Fabians committed themselves to the idea that a 'civilised' nation was entitled to rule over an 'uncivilised' nation for the benefit of the 'uncivilised' nation and the world as a whole. This was essentially the doctrine of 'trusteeship' which the Labour party later came to adopt as the basis of its colonial policy. Imperialists approved of the pamphlet. It was well received by the press and won praise from Beatrice Webb and Lord Rosebery, but the general public seemed to ignore it.

The Independent Labour Party did not view the Empire and the Boer war in the same light as the Fabians. On 9 September 1899 the National Administrative Council of the I.L.P. met at Blackburn and adopted a resolution which protested 'against the manner in which the governmmt, by the tenor of their despatch and their warlike preparations have made a peaceful settlement difficult with the Transvaal Republic.' The resolution went on to assert that there was an ulterior and unworthy motive behind the pretence of broadening the political liberties of

1. 'Fabianism and the Empire', p.6.

the Uitlanders. This was the pressure of capitalists who wanted control of the goldfields. The resolution felt that even if the grievances of the Uitlanders were the real reason for the threatened hostilities war would be 'an extreme course quite uncalled for.'[1] The resolution was signed by J. Keir Hardie, Philip Snowden, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Francis Littlewood, J. Bruce Glasier, H. Russell Smart, James Parker, Joseph Burgess and John Penny.

The I.L.P. and the S.D.F. which were opposed to the war were unrepresented in Parliament until Keir Hardie became a member in December 1900. All the Labour politicians in Parliament were unanimous against the war in 1900 with the one exception of Havelock Wilson. John Burns led the parliamentary battle until Hardie was elected. Hardie carried on a campaign against the Boer war in the 'Labour Leader'. In an article on Rhodes, he declared that the founder of Rhodesia was a 'confirmed drunkard - a dipsomaniac in the language of social and conventional diplomacy.'[2] In other articles, the 'Labour Leader' drew attention to the share lists of the Chartered Company and De Beers Limited, suggesting that the companies were benefiting from the war. It also thought that members of these companies were in a position to influence the colonial policy of the government.[3] Keir Hardie declared that the war was 'a capitalists' war begotten by capitalists' money, lied into being by a perjured mercenary capitalist press, and fathered by unscrupulous politicians, themselves the merest tools of the capitalists.... As socialists, our sympathies are bound to be with the Boers.'[4] The fullest exposition of the anti-capitalist argument was

1. quoted in 'J. Keir Hardie', William Stewart, p.150.
2. quoted in B. Porter, op.cit., p.125
3. W. Stewart, 'J. Keir Hardie',p.153.
4. Labour Leader, 6 January 1900,p.4.

given by Burns in the House of Commons in February 1900. He declared that the war was not being fought for the franchise but for the gold and diamonds of South Africa. It had been engineered by a financial gang led by Rhodes and Beit.[1]

Hardie, in contrast to the Fabians, thought that in order to achieve 'socialism', the Empire would have to be sacrificed. He wrote that 'a great and extended Empire lengthens the period required for the change from production for profit to production for use, and thus prolongs the misery' and consequently it followed that the loss of the Empire would hasten the advent of socialism. 'The greater the Empire the greater the military expenditure and the harder the lot of the workers. Modern Imperialism is, in fact, to the socialist, simply capitalism in its most predatory and militant phase.'[2]

The I.L.P. organised many anti-war demonstrations in various parts of the country despite the intimidation of the war party. These were held in Leeds, Manchester, York, Birmingham, Glasgow, Edinburgh and other places. The violent opposition of the press to these demonstrations helped to advertise the aims of the I.L.P. The 'Labour Leader' continued to thunder against the 'capitalist war', in which the British merchant was hoping to secure markets for his goods, the investor an outlet for his capital, the speculator looking for more 'fools' to make money out of, and the mining companies wanted cheaper labour and increased dividends.[3]

Hardie hoped that he could unite the I.L.P. with the anti-war forces in the Liberal party. He wrote a letter to John Morley stating that 'already two hundred and twelve thousand have paid affiliation fees to the L.R.C. What is

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1. Hansard, Fourth Series, Vol.78 col.785-96, 6 February 1900.
2. W. Stewart, op.cit., p.154.
3. ibid, p.157.

wanted to fuse these elements is a man with the brain to dare, the hand to do, and the heart to inspire, will you be that man?'[1] Morley did not respond to this open invitation. However, Hardie still hoped that he could get some agreement with the Liberal anti-imperialists and he invited opinions in the 'Labour Leader' on whether the I.L.P. should issue a white list of candidates other than Labour party nominees who, because of their consistent opposition to the war policy, should receive the support of the I.L.P. electors. It was thought that men such as John Morley, Leonard Courtney, Dr. Clark and Lloyd George might be on the list. At its Conference on 29 September 1900 a proposal that the branches should be strongly recommended to vote in favour of those candidates with a good anti-imperialist record and a Labour recommendation was defeated by the close vote of 42 to 39.[2]

While Keir Hardie was trying and failing to get the support of the Liberal anti-imperialists, Sidney Webb was trying to get the support of the imperialists. Webb thought that the I.L.P.'s attitude to the war was hopelessly out of touch with 'modern' attitudes, and public sentiment. He wrote in 1901 that 'when the war came the secret was out, outside the two spheres of Labour and local government, the majority of socialist leaders proved to be with regard to the British Empire, mere administrative nihilists - that is to say, ultra-Nationalists, ultra-Gladstonian, Old Liberal to the fingertips..... They out-Morleyed Morley on the burning topic of the day, and are now as hopelessly out of the running as the Gladstonian party.'[3] Beatrice, however, did not seem to share this opinion, she wrote in her diary for 19 July 1900

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1. ibid, p.169
2. ibid, p.170
3. 'Nineteenth Century', September 1901, p.374.

that 'the Fabian Society.....is completely out of it, the majority believing in the inevitability of war, whilst the minority regard the majority as being the worst kind of traitors.'[1] Poirier writes that the attitude of the more prominent Fabians towards the war helped to undermine both their influence and interest in the larger political Labour movement.[2]

While the majority of members of trade unions probably supported the Empire, the leadership of the T.U.C. tried to ensure that its membership saw the relevance of the war to their immediate interests. Not only was the industrial situation in South Africa similar to that in England, they argued, but the war would bring 'great suffering and irreparable injury to the workpeople of both countries' by diverting the peoples attention away from social reform and the government's failure in this field, by increasing the tax burden and by diminishing the opportunities for white emigre employment in South Africa.[3] Blatchford was, says Semmel, the leading spokesman for the rank-and-file socialists. He was an advocate of economic nationalism, imperialism, militarism and jingoism. 'We were Britons first and Socialists next.'[4] However, Pelling argues that there was no 'continuous support for the cause of imperialism among any sections of the working class'.[5] It seems that, as Price states, the main attitude of the working class to the Boer war was one of indifference.[6]

The S.D.F.'s analysis of the warwas that it had been brought about by the machinations of international armaments rings sponsored by international financiers. All the various

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1. B. Webb Diaries, op.cit., 19 July 1900
2. P. Poirier, 'The Advent of the Labour Party', (London,1958) p.103.
3. B. Porter, op.cit.,p.132.
4. B. Semmel, 'Imperialism and Social Reform',pp.222-224,(1960)
5. A. Pelling, 'Popular Politics and Society in late Victorian Britian (London,1968),Chapter 5, 'British Labour and British Imperialism',pp.82-100
6. R.Price'An Imperial War and the British Working Class' (London1972)

groups came together for the first Labour party Conference which took place in February 1901. The motions passed on Imperialism and the Boer war were supplied by the anti-imperialist forces. J. Burgess of the I.L.P. moved that modern imperialism was a 'reversion to one of the worst phases of barbarism, inimical to social reform and disastrous to trade and commerce, a fruitful cause of war, destructive to freedom, fraught with menace to representative institutions at home and abroad, and must end in the destruction of democracy'. The Conference desired 'most earnestly' to impress upon the working class the urgent need to combat imperialism in all its manifestations. The resolution on the war was also supplied bythe I.L.P. This stated that 'congress, believing the harrowing war in South Africa to be mainly due to the corrupt agitation of the Transvaal mine owners, having for its object the acquisition of monopolies and a cheap supply of coloured and European labour, protests against the destruction of the two republics.'[1] The resolution invited the government to cease hostilities and submit to arbitration under the Hague Convention all matters in dispute between Great Britain and the countries with which she was at war. Both resolutions were passed unanimously.

During its discussion of the Boer war, the Labour party showed no widespread or constant concern for the welfare of the Africans in South Africa. Hardie protested occasionally about the working conditions of the Africans but the movement as a whole did not show much concern for the Africans. As Henderson states, that the 'T.U.C. was primarily concerned with the welfare of the white labour, with which the welfare of Native labour might well be incompatible.'[2]

1. Labour Party Conference Report, February 1901.
2. I. Henderson, 'The Attitude and Policy of the Main Sections of the British Labour Movement to Imperial Issues,1899-1924' (unpub. B.Litt. thesis, Oxford 1965), p.47.

After the upsurge in interest in imperial questions at the time of the Boer war, the Labour Movement showed little concern for the Empire between 1902-1914. Henderson describes the Labour attitude as 'apathetic and somnolent'.[1] The Labour movement managed some protest against the importation of Chinese Labour into the Transvaal. The T.U.C. saw the issue as the simple one of undercutting.[2] Tsiang writes that the sympathy shown by British labour for the trade unionists in South Africa was especially noteworthy, but the 'predominant characteristic of the reaction of British labour to British imperialism in Africa from 1880 to 1920 is acquiescence.'[3] Henderson states that 'when it came to basic native rights the Labour Party could hardly summon enough interest to vote, far less to speak.'[4]

One of the few pamphlets, apart from 'Fabianism and the Empire' to be issued by an organisation connected with the Labour party was 'Imperialism'[5] published by the City of London branch of the I.L.P. in May 1900. Porter thinks that it may have been written by MacDonald.[6] The pamphlet stated that imperialism was a world policy, not merely a colonial policy. 'It implies that in our relations with other states we are to be guided not so much by the ideals of co-operation as by the assumptions of superiority; it inevitably leads to territorial expansion and to an increasing burden of political responsibility over native races.' Imperialism and militarism went hand in hand with the result that the military had greater influence upon industry and government. The attention of the electorate

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1. ibid, p.49
2. ibid, p.71
3. Tingfu Fuller Tsiang, 'Labour and the Empire'(Columbia U.P.)p.95
4. I. Henderson, op.cit., p.56
5. 'Imperialism', (City of London branch, I.L.P., May 1900)
6. B. Porter, op.cit., p.136. However the pamphlet's criticism of imperialism is stronger than MacDonald usually used.

was diverted from domestic politics and a class of demagogues disputed between themselves for the government of the country. By impoverishing the skill of the country and by encouraging the worst forms of financial capitalism, imperialism crushed out every budding hope that labour had of becoming economically and politically free.

The pamphlet stated that the Labour party stood for domestic reform first and should not be led astray by the pseudo-social reform which imperialism promoted. The social reform of imperialism was either a species of political bribery or of aristocratic philanthropy. Both were equally fatal to the state. 'We shall do more to civilise Africa by civilising the East End of London than by governing from Cape to Cairo... Our responsibility for the weaker peoples must be that we protect them from our vices and guard them against those exploiting classes which are our own gravest menace.'[1] It was not Britain's responsibility to 'teach' civilisation to alien races. Civilisation was a growth determined by the religion, history and circumstances of a people: it could not be carried about. A Western civilisation could not be imposed on an Eastern or a Temperate upon a Tropical people. 'We can no more send our civilisation to central Africa than we can send our climate there.'[2] This was attacking the Fabian idea of Imperialism as a civilising mission. It was not possible stated the I.L.P. pamphlet to have a 'sane' or 'non-jingoistic' imperialism. 'Imperialism meant the constant extension of territory, whether we like it or not, the continued subjection of peoples, whether we intend it or not. The only difference between the 'Jingo' and the 'sane' imperialist was that the former knew his own mind and something

1. 'Imperialism', op.cit., p.15
2. ibid. p.7.

of the influence of the imperial idea in history, whilst the latter knew neither his own mind nor his history.'[1]

The emphasis of the pamphlet was critical of the Fabian's policy of the civilising mission of imperialism. It emphasised John Stuart Mill's statement that "the government of a people by itself has a meaning and a reality; but such a thing as government of one people by another does not, and cannot, exist."[2] Another writer who was also critical of the Fabian's view of the Boer War and imperialism was J.A. Hobson.

Hobson's was the most influential intellectual case against Imperialism. He was not a socialist but a Liberal economist. His book 'Imperialism'[3] formed the basis of socialist thinking on imperial and colonial questions, influencing Lenin as well as British socialists. Hobson believed that Britain's foreign policy was primarily aimed at obtaining profitable markets for investment. The investor could not find profitable use for his capital at home so he insisted that the government should help him to secure profitable and safe investment abroad. These investors, living on returns from their investment abroad, then had an ever-increasing incentive to persuade the government to enable them to extend the field of their private investments and to safeguard and extend their existing investments. Hobson thought that the South African war had been undertaken largely for the benefit of big financiers who had made immense profits by war contracts and freezing out the smaller interests in the Transvaal. Finance was not the 'motor power' of Imperialism, this was provided by the patriotic forces which politicians, philanthropists and traders generated but finance

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1. ibid, p.10.
2. Quoted, ibid, p.1.
3. J.A. Hobson 'Imperialism', (London, 1902).

was the 'governor of the imperial engine' which manipulated these forces. The standard of consumption of the working class of Great Britain was kept down and, as a result, there was an excess of goods and capital and opportunity for profitable overseas investment. This occurred because wages were based upon the cost of living and not upon the efficiency of labour. The result was that the population did not have enough to spend on anything other than the basic necessities.

According to Hobson, a fourth of the population of England[1] was in poverty. (These he called the 'inefficient fourth') 'If by some economic readjustment, the products which flow from the surplus saving of the rich to swell the overflow streams could be diverted so as to raise the incomes and the standard of the inefficient fourth, there would be no need for pushful imperialism, and the cause of social reform would have won a great victory.'[2] Trade unionism and socialism were the natural enemies of imperialism because they strove to take away from the imperialist classes the surplus incomes which formed the economic stimulus of imperialism. No social reforms could be seriously advanced as long as the expansion of the Empire and its satellite (militarism) absorbed the time, energy and money of the state. Another result of the existence of the empire which tended to prevent reform was that it had created a class of men who mainly lived in the South of England and possessed social and local influence whose character had been formed and whose incomes were chiefly derived from the maintenance and furtherance of imperial rule.

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1. This may have been an exaggeration but studies by Rowntree and Booth at this time had shown that in some major cities over 30% of the people were in what they classed as 'poverty'.
2. J.A. Hobson 'Imperialism', p.86.

Hobson thought that the solution was to secure popular government which he believed would lead to internationalism while to retain class government would retain military imperialism and international conflict as a result of the conflict of rival imperial powers for markets.

Hobson established two principles for the relations between 'civilised' nations and the less developed. The first was that all interference on the part of the 'civilised white nations with lower races' was not prima facie illegitimate and second 'that such interference cannot be safely left to private enterprise'.[1] Interference with 'native' peoples should be attended by an improvement and elevation of the character of the people who were brought under control. In order to ensure that the interference was directed towards the well-being of the 'natives' and not the special interest of the interfering nation, Hobson thought that an international organisation should be established.[2] 'Sane' imperialism was devoted to the protection, education and self- development of a lower race whereas 'insane' imperialism handed over these races to the economic exploitation of the white colonists. Hobson thought that the difference between these two policies could be observed in the difference adopted in Basutoland and that followed in Johannesburg and Rhodesia.

Hobson saw a dangerous tendency in politically powerful classes in Great Britain deriving their income from capital invested outside the British Empire. He feared that it would mean a growing tendency for them to use their political power

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1. ibid, p.232.
2. In 'The Scientific Basis of Imperialism', Political Science Quarterly XVII, 1902, p.489, Hobson argues for a federation of civilised nations but recognises that this would form the supreme test of civilisation. Would a federation of civilised states be able to maintain the force requisite to keep order in the world without abusing its power by political and economic parasitism?

to interfere with the political condition of these states where they had an industrial stake. The only way to stop it was by an absolute ban on the right of British subjects to call upon their government to protect their persons and property from injury or danger incurred on their private initiative. Hobson ended his book by declaring that 'Imperialism is a depraved choice of national life, imposed by self-seeking interests which appeal to the lusts of quantitative acquisitiveness and of forceful domination surviving in a nation from early centuries of animal struggle for existence. Its adoption as a policy implies a deliberate renunciation of that cultivation of the higher inner qualities which for a nation as for an individual constitutes the ascendancy of reason over brute impulse. It is the besetting sin of all successful states, and its penalty is unalterable in the order of nature.'[1]

The key to Hobson's theory is contained in the statement that 'over production in the sense of an excessive manufacturing plant, and surplus capital which could not find sound investments within the country, forced Great Britain, Germany, Holland, and France to place larger and larger portions of their economic resources outside the area of their present political domain, and then stimulate a policy of political expansion so as to take in the new areas.'[2] Economists have questioned whether he supplies sufficient evidence to support the claim that colonies were the product either of a demand for new investment opportunities, or of security for existing investments. He shows that during the period when British possessions increased by 4754m. square miles and by a population of 88 millions that British overseas investments

1. J.A. Hobson, 'Imperialism', p.368
2. ibid, p.80.

also increased enormously from £144 m to £1698 m between 1862 and 1893 alone. Hobson believed that there was a connection between these sets of figures. However, Fieldhouse shows that Hobson in no sense proved that there was any connection between the investments made overseas and the territory acquired at the same time.[1] Hobson's theory is dented somewhat by the fact that there was nearly as much investment in Europe and the Americas as in the Empire, but Britain had no political control over those territories. The dependent African colonies provided only 2.5 per cent of investment.

Although Hobson's analysis was flawed a large number of people were eventually influenced by it. His analysis formed a basis on which a coherent attack on imperialism could be made. Lenin made use of it in his pamphlet 'Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism' to suggest that imperialism was the last stage of capitalism and in order to destroy capitalism, imperialism would also have to be destroyed.[2] Hobson's book also influenced members of the Labour movement and those who were to form its colonial policy after the war. As Henderson writes, 'it required the shock of World War One to make the Labour Movement take Hobson seriously.'[3] The Labour party was to take up the idea of a reforming imperialism, based on international control.

The Marxist position on colonies was that, as Lenin declared, for a socialist to have a colonial policy was a contradiction in terms. Imperialism was the dying stage of capitalism therefore the struggle of the workers in Britain

1. D.K. Fieldhouse, Economic History Review, Vol.XIV, No.2, 1961, p.190
2. V.I. Lenin 'Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism', 1916.
3. I. Henderson, op.cit., p.71.

and the struggle of the Africans in the colonies was a struggle against the same thing, bourgeois capitalism. The workers of Britain should join with the Africans of the colonies in smashing capitalism. For workers to have a policy for administering imperialism was a betrayal of the class struggle and their own interests. Lenin believed that the workers of Britain had been bribed by the bourgeoisie into accepting the colonies and imperialism. The workers of Britain were benefiting from the exploitation of the colonies, rather than realising that if they were going to abolish capitalism they would have to fight imperialism. By supporting imperialism they were supporting capitalism. Lenin thought that the British workers were 'opportunists' who were unable to see where their 'true' interests lay.

Engels had been the first to point out this tendency in the British working class. On 7 October 1858, he wrote to Marx that 'the English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat as well as a bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world that is, of course, to a certain extent justifiable.'[1] On August 11, 1881, he wrote of 'the worst type of English trade unions which allow themselves to be led by men bought, or at least paid by, the bourgeoisie.'[2] Engels wrote to Kautsky on 12 September 1882, 'You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy? Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general. There is no workers' party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal Radicals, and

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1. Engels to Marx, 7 October 1858, in Marx and Engels selected correspondence, Moscow 1953, English trans., p.132-3
2. Engels to Marx, 11 August 1881, ibid. (in Lenin 'Imperialism .....', op.cit., p.129).

the workers merrily share the feast of England's monopoly of the colonies and the world market.'[1]

Engels was probably correct in stating that the working class had no definite ideas about colonial policy. There seemed to be massive indifference among the working class to imperial problems, particularly those of indigenous peoples.

Lenin stated in 'Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism' that 'the receipt of high monopoly profits by the capitalists in one of the numerous branches of industry, in one of the numerous countries, etc., makes it economically possible for them to bribe certain sections of the workers, and for a time a considerable minority of them, and win them to the side of the bourgeoisie of a given industry or given nation against all the others. The intensification of the antagonism between imperialist nations for the division of the world increases this striving. And so there is created that bond between imperialism and opportunism, which revealed itself first and most clearly in England, owing to the fact that certain features of imperialist development were observable there much earlier than in other countries.'[2]

While it may not be true that British labour was directly "bought off" by the profits of imperialism, as Lenin stated, it was true that the British working class did not seem very revolutionary. The Conservative and Liberal parties carried out just enough reform to prevent the upsurge of revolutionary politics. Most Labour leaders were prepared to accept the empire and did not devote much thought to it. However, Keir Hardie was one of the few to address himself to the problems of the empire.

Hardie had moods when he thought that the Empire should

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1. Engels-to Kautsky, 12 September 1882
2. Lenin,'Imperialism....',op.cit., p.152

be abolished. He had written in the 'Labour Leader' that 'the loss of Empire would hasten the advent of Socialism'.[1] He also showed concern for the plight of the Africans. Commenting on the Natal massacres, he wrote a letter to Mr. Bankole Bright, an African leader, which was published in the 'Central African Times'; 'the wholesale massacre of natives which is now going on in South Africa, under the pretext of suppressing a rebellion which does not exist fills one with shame and horror. I hope the day will speedily come when your race will be able to defend itself against the barbarities being perpetuated against it by hypocritical whites, who regard the black man as having been created in order that they might exploit him for their own advantage!'[2] Hardie went on to state that the press and politicians in England were keeping the people in ignorance of the real conditions of the 'native' in South Africa.

Macdonald was the other Labour leader to show interest in the empire. After his election to Parliament in 1906, he wrote to Morel of the Congo Reform Society to ask whether the Labour party could further the aims of the Society in the House of Commons. He became one of Morel's leading parliamentary allies. When martial law was imposed in Natal as a result of African riots, Macdonald moved an adjournment motion in protest. He thought that the British Government should not have sanctioned the execution of ten men who were blamed for the riots by the Natal Government. It was the job of the British Government to protect the interests of the Africans who were not represented in the government of Natal.[3]

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1. quoted, W. Stewart, op.cit., p.154
2. ibid, p.268
3. House of Commons Reports, Fourth Series, 2 April 1906; D. Marquand, op.cit., p.98.

MacDonald thought that contact should be made with the colonies in order to prevent 'anti-labour political sections being able to exploit the Labour movement of our colonies and the awkward effect such an exploitation might have upon our movement during a General Election.'[1] He hoped to send a deputation to Australia which would draw the Colonial Labour movement and the British into closer touch. Unfortunately the Australian Labour party did 'not see their way clear to fall in with the suggestion.'[2] However, undaunted, MacDonald wrote to Senator J.C. Watson of the House of Representatives, Melbourne, in which he stated that the Senator would have seen the successes that had met the efforts of the L.R.C. to create a Labour party. 'We are anxious to meet our Colonial friends with a view to coming to an understanding with the Democratic and Labour forces in the Empire, as we consider this to be the next step which the Labour Movements at home and in the Colonies should take.' The Labour R.C. had no intention of interfering with Australian fiscal policy or interfering in internal colonial matters but had four main objects:

1. To rescue the Empire and the Imperial spirit from being exploited by the reactionary and anti-social classes at home.
2. To make the Empire stand for Peace and Democratic Justice in the eyes of the whole world.
3. To study the various social experiments which have been started in the colonies.
4. To get our colonial fellow-workers to understand the Labour Movement of the Mother Country and to feel a share in its fortune.

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1. L.R.C. Papers 24/341, letter June 26, 1905.
2. L.R.C. Papers 26/245, letter to MacDonald from A.Mitchell 28 July, 1905.

Although the Australian party does not seem to have responded, the letter indicates the Labour party's attitude towards the Empire.[1] After a tour of Canada, Australia and New Zealand in the autumn and winter of 1906, MacDonald wrote a book[2] on the Empire stating the principles by which he thought the Empire should be governed. In contrast to Lenin and the Marxists, MacDonald thought that the Empire should not be abolished or ended. It existed and the Labour party had to reform it so that it would be an instrument of improvement for its subjects rather than an instrument of exploitation. This was to become the Labour party's general approach to the Empire, it believed in reforming it rather than abolishing it. MacDonald and the Labour party did not accept that the colonial relationship was inevitably one of exploitation.

MacDonald stated there was a contradiction between democratic and imperialist principles. The democratic method was to develop 'native' civilisation on its own lines while the imperialist method was to impose on it an alien civilisation. Democracy and Imperialism were incompatible. The job of the Labour party in imperial politics, thought MacDonald, was to democratise the imperial machine. A trade union secretary would make a better job of governing a province than the son of an ancient family or someone who was a friend of the colonial secretary when he was at Balliol. MacDonald thought that the imperialist method of trusting the 'man on the spot' led to anarchy and chaos. The Labour party realised that there were two men on the spot and the task of the British government was to discriminate between the true

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1. L.R.C. 31/431, MacDonald to Senator J.C. Watson, 29 January 1906.
2. J.R. MacDonald 'Labour and the Empire', (London, 1907).

and the false voices. MacDonald wanted to establish an 'imperial standard' of behaviour among the colonies and states of the Empire. The unity required to adopt this standard of 'good behaviour' could not be enforced but would have to be an expression of an already existing desire. The Labour party would be in a better position to gain this co-operation because it had not incurred the suspicion of the Colonies. Friendly co-operation between the Labour parties of the Empire was an essential first step to a genuine imperial unity. The imperial standard consisted of 'certain axioms regarding liberty and the administration of justice' which were being broken by South Africa's 'native' policy. MacDonald did not expand on these ideas at any length. It was the duty of the imperial authorities to insist that the self-governing state should adopt a 'native' policy consistent with the honour of the Empire. There should be an imperial authority set up which would ensure that the 'imperial standard' was adhered to. This authority should be representative of each imperial state and should not sit in London. The 'imperial standard' should be set out in a declaration similar to the American Declaration of Independence.

Concerning the dependencies which were governed directly by Britain, MacDonald thought that a reform of the civil service was needed to ensure that a more sympathetic attitude was taken to the aspirations of the 'native' people. The Labour party's attitude towards 'imperialism is not of the aggressive or bragging order; it does not believe in the subjection of other nationalities; it takes no pride in government of 'other' peoples. To its subject races it desires to occupy the position of friend; to its self-governing imperial states it seeks to be an equal; to the

world it asks to be regarded as a neighbour.'[1] Towards the colonies the attitude is one of administering the territories in the interests of the inhabitants and not in accordance with the commercial or national needs of Great Britain. The development of the 'native' organisations, not the imposing of the ends of British national life should be the aim. 'As long as we regard the native as one we must rule, we are attempting the palpable impossibility of ruling democratically at home and despotically abroad. The result will be that our democratic systems will crumble, eaten to the heart of their supports by the autocracy of our dependency rule.'[2]

A clash between the 'marxist' and 'reformist' views on colonial policy occurred at the 1907 meeting of the Second International at Stuttgart. The colonial question and militarism were the central issues. MacDonald, as representative of the Labour party and the I.L.P., supported a motion which proposed that 'This congress....does not condemn in principle and for all time every kind of colonial policy, which - under a socialist regime - can be a work of civilisation' and proposed 'an international agreement aiming at creating an international law, safeguarding the rights of natives, of which the contracting nations will be the mutual guarantors.'[3]

MacDonald spoke in favour of the motion saying that 'we must have the courage to draw up a programme of colonial policy.....capitalists cannot do all they want in the sphere of colonial policy for they are generally submitted to the

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1. MacDonald, op.cit., p.108-9.
2. ibid, p.103.
3. quoted in R. Fox, 'The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism' (London, 1933), p.110. -B.J. Hovde, 'Socialistic Theories of Imperialism', pp.589-591 Journal of Political Economy Vo. XXXVI, 1928.

control of parliament.'[1] MacDonald's belief in the power of Parliament to check imperialism was not supported by others at the conference. Lenin stated that 'a wide colonial policy has led to the European proletariat party falling into such a position that the whole of society does not exist by its labour, but by the labour of the almost enslaved colonial slaves. The English bourgeoisie, for example, draws bigger revenues from the tens and hundreds of millions of the population of India and their other colonies than from the English workers. In such conditions in certain countries a material and economic basis is created for the poisoning of the proletariat of this or that country by colonial jingoism.'[2] Lenin's arguments won and the motion was rejected; another was passed in its place which stated that 'the Congress declares that capitalist colonial policy in its innermost essence of necessity leads to enslavement, forced labour or extermination of the native population of the colonised areas. The civilising mission which capitalist society professes serves only as a cover for the thirst for exploitation and conquest. Only socialist society will first offer all nations the possibility of full cultural development.'[3]

This point of viewwas not accepted by the Labour party. Its policy was to be based on an attempt to civilise the colonies and lead them to self-government. The party did believe that it was possible to have a 'just' colonial policy and did not agree with those who thought that all colonial policy was a cloak for self-interest. However, before the First World War, the Labour party as a whole did not devote such attention to colonial policy or the problems

1. quoted in R. Fox, op.cit., p.111.
2. ibid.
3. Quoted in R. Palme Dutt, 'The Crisis of Britain and the British Empire', (London, 1953),p.322.

of the indigenous peoples of Africa. Leaders such as Shaw, Hardie and MacDonald offered their own thoughts on the question of empire but there was no coherent party statement. MacDonald and Hardie made various tours of the empire and showed some fascination with it but among the rank and file of the party and the trade unions there was general apathy. Labour had no clear policy about the empire but Macdonald's writings did point the way and indicate that when the party formulated a policy it would not be a revolutionary but a reformist one.

However, in 1909 when the South African Bill was passing through the House of Commons, Labour members did join with the Liberal radicals opposing the act on the ground that inadequate protection was given to 'native' interests. MacDonald suggested that a franchise restricted to men of 'European descent' would have excluded the vote from the founders of the world's great religions and Keir Hardie pointed out that the Bill was the last chance the Imperial government would have to interfere for good in the affairs of South Africa. But their arguments were of no avail, and Balfour declared that to give the 'natives' equal rights with the whites would threaten civilisation.[1] Discrimination has been practised in South Africa ever since. The question of equal rights was to become one of the main points of contention in the later debate. People like Norman Leys suggesting that this should be the basis of the Labour party's policy.

1. House of Commons Reports, Fifth Series, Vol. 9, 16-19 August 1909, 961ff.

CHAPTER 2.

BEGINNINGS OF A POLICY

The advent of the 1914-18 war forced the Labour party to devote more thought to international issues. The way the working classes of Europe marched off to fight each other for nationalist causes showed the long way that socialists still had to go in making international brotherhood more important than nationalism. Keir Hardie was heartbroken and soon died, his life's work had collapsed around him.[1] Henderson accepted a post in the government while MacDonald took an anti-war stand. MacDonald's attitude was based on disagreement with the government's policy and not the pacificism of some of his colleagues. "The Times" castigated him for helping the enemy and he was subject to much abuse for his beliefs.[2] The Labour party had been united in opposition to the war until it was declared. Then the party was split into a minority wing, which opposed the war, and a majority wing, which supported it. It was not until the late summer of 1917, when Henderson left the government, that the Labour party became united again.

The war was to play a major part in the decline of the Liberal party. The fact that some members of the Labour party, principally, MacDonald and those associated with the I.L.P., opposed the war put them in a similar position to that of Liberal radicals and internationlists such as E.D. Morel, Arthur Ponsonby, H.N. Brailsford, Charles Roden Buxton, J.A. Hobson and C.P. Trevelyan who opposed the war through the Union for Democratic Control. Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden were the main connecting links between the I.L.P. and the U.D.C., both being in the I.L.P. and on the

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1. I. Mclean Keir Hardie (London, 1975) Chapter 7.
2. D. Marquand, op.cit., Chapter 10.

Executive Committee of the U.D.C. As Mowat writes, MacDonald 'prepared the way for the influx of Liberals such as Ponsonby, Trevelyan, Wedgwood, Addison and Haldane into the Labour party.'[1] Many Liberals, dissatisfied with the Liberal party's reaction to the war and internationalism, left the Liberal party and joined the I.L.P., and through that the Labour party, to which the I.L.P. was affiliated. Cline states that 'these recruits, so articulate on the problems of Kenya and India, so vociferous concerning the necessity of destroying secret diplomacy, initiating taxation of land values, and revising the Versailles treaty were almost silent on the central principle of their newly adopted party.'[2] E.D. Morel was one of the first of the radical founders of the U.D.C. to leave the Liberal party. He joined the I.L.P. soon after his release from prison at the end of January 1918. He was grateful to I.L.P. members who had stood by him and who had upheld the principles of the U.D.C. He wrote to his friend William Cadbury: "I have long been gravitating towards the socialist position - of course there is Socialism and Socialism, and mine is of the reasonable and moderate kind.....I can't help feeling that the conglomeration of circumstances which have produced this frightful catastrophe.....show that the whole fabric of society is on the wrong lines - cut throat competition instead of co-operation for the common weal.....Party Liberalism as represented by both wings - the Lloyd George wing and the Asquith wing is right outside my outlook now."[3]

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1. C.L. Mowat, 'Ramsay MacDonald and the Labour Party' in Royden Harrison, ed. 'Essays in Labour History'. D. Marquand, op.cit., Chapters 10 and 11.
2. C.A. Cline, 'Recruits to Labour, The British Labour Party 1914-31' 'Syracuse University Press, 1963)p.31.
3. Morel to Cadbury, 7 April 1918, Morel Papers.

Josiah Wedgwood, the Liberal M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme and member of the famous pottery family, joined the I.L.P. in 1919. His daughter wrote in her diary for 8 April 1919:[1] "I had a letter from father saying he means to join the I.L.P. in June (after explaining to constituents).....and although he doesn't entirely agree with them in economics, there is no doubt his general attitude is much more I.L.P. than anything else. (I think the business in Russia was the final straw that made father write straight off to the I.L.P. - that and the dropping of the Land Valuation Act.)"

It was ex-Liberals such as E.D. Morel, H.N. Brailsford, C.R. Buxton, J.A. Hobson and Josiah Wedgwood who were to play a major part in determining the Labour party's international and colonial policy after the war. Semmel writes that 'partially as a result of their influence the postwar Labour party once again took up the internationalist cause and even elected J.R. MacDonald, who had been denounced as a wartime traitor, as its leader.'[2] I. Henderson believes that the U.D.C.'s influence on Labour's colonial policy was a spiritual influence. 'It brought talk of internationalism and international control of colonies into Labour circles' and 'instilled a suspicion of imperialism.'[3] As Cline states, the ex-Liberals provided an informed leadership on international and imperial affairs which the party would otherwise have lacked and it is difficult to imagine what Labour policy would have been without their efforts.[4] These

1. Diary of Miss H.B. Wedgwood, ed. Mrs. Pease, Wedgwood Papers. (Keele University)
2. B. Semmel, 'Imperialism and Social Reform' (London, 1960) p.247
3. I. Henderson, 'The Attitude and Policy of the Main Sections of British Labour Movement to Imperial Issues, 1899-1924' (unpub. B. Litt. thesis, Oxford 1965), p.124
4. C.A. Cline, op.cit., p.31.

people ensured that the Labour party would not ignore colonial matters as it had done in the past. This influx of ex-Liberals also strengthened the Liberal tendencies already present in the party. It brought in a body of men who were experts on international and colonial problems, men who supported policies of international control and free trade rather than the 'little-Englandism' of the pre-war I.L.P. or the imperialism of the majority of the pre-war Fabians. It was these men who were to staff the Labour party's advisory committees on international and colonial questions along with a few Fabians and other members of the I.L.P. These advisory committees were to be very important in the early formulation of Labour's international policy, particularly its colonial policy. As Winkler writes, the 'Advisory Committee on International Questions was of the utmost importance' during the period 1918-29.[1] These ex-Liberals directed the Labour party into a concern for colonial and international affairs but their outlook was 'of the reasonable and moderate kind'. They would not lead the Labour party into any extreme ways.

The Labour party began to consider its policy and organisation in 1917 after Henderson had resigned from the Lloyd George government. The Cabinet had left Henderson 'on the mat' outside the Cabinet room after he had supported an international congress in Paris. The Cabinet thought that Henderson's visit to Paris with Ramsay MacDonald might be construed as support for MacDonald's views. Lloyd George formally rebuked Henderson with the result that Henderson resigned in a state of great indignation. He then devoted himself to the affairs of the party, shaping a major

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1. H.R. Winkler, 'Labour Foreign Policy in G.B., 1918-29', Journal of Modern History, vol.28, no.2(1956),p.248.

re-organisation of its structure and also devising a foreign policy. This was, says Pelling, a 'turning-point in the history of the Labour party.'[1] The ideas of the U.D.C. influenced the foreign policy of the Labour party.[2] The Labour Executive appointed a six man sub-committee to draw up a programme of foreign policy. The committee consisted of Henderson, MacDonald, F.W. Jowett, two trade unionists, G.H. Wardle and G.H. Roberts, and Sidney Webb. MacDonald and Jowett were on the Executive of the U.D.C. and Henderson had been a former member. Henderson, MacDonald and Sidney Webb were mainly responsible for the foreign policy document - 'Memo on War Issues'. MacDonald prepared the final version and it was largely through him that the U.D.C. exerted its influence on the foreign policy of the Labour party.

The Memorandum on War Issues was presented to the Labour party Executive on August 10 1917 and approved by a special conference of the Labour Movement on 28 December 1917. Its proposals were similar to those put to the Foreign Office in June by the U.D.C. which had appeared in the 'Manchester Guardian' on 2 July 1917.[3] The Memo demanded the establishment of a League of Nations and machinery for the mediation of international disputes; internationaltrusteeship of African colonies; and international action to deal with economic problems such as the supply of raw materials. It stated that the 'British Labour Movement disclaims all sympathy with the imperialist idea that these (colonies) should form the booty of any nation, should be exploited for the profit of the capitalists or should be used for the

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1. H. Pelling, 'A Short History of the Labour Party' (London, 1968),pp.41-2
2. M. Swartz, 'The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics during the First World War' (Oxford, 1971)pp.165-169; A.J.P. Taylor, 'The Troublemakers' (London,1964)pp.140-1
3. 'Manchester Guardian', 2 July 1917.

promotion of the militarist aims of governments.' It went on to declare that the 'interests of humanity would be best served by the full and frank abandonment by all belligerents of any dreams of an African Empire; the transfer of all the present Colonies of the European Powers in Tropical Africa, together with the nominally independent Republic of Liberia to the proposed Supernational Authority or League of Nations herein suggested, and their administrationby an impartial Commission under that Authority with its own trained staff, as a single independent African state, on the principles of (1) the Open Door and Equal Freedom of enterprise to the traders of all nations; (2) Protection of the natives against exploitation and oppression and the preservation of their tribal interests; (3) all revenue raised to be expended for the welfare and development of the African State itself; and (4) the permanent neutralisation of this African State and its abstention from participation in international rivalries or any future wars.'[1]

This proposal for putting all the colonies of Africa under a supernational authority to be administered as a single African state was a novel one. Surprisingly, the I.L.P. disagreed with it and took a more realistic line. In a note on the Memo, it pointed out that in general terms it supported the suggestion of the internationalisation and neutralisation of tropical Africa but there were 'enormous and perhaps insurmountable' difficulties. It would still leave British colonies in South Africa and South West Africa. There were also grave doubts as to the practicality of the League of Nations at present being able thoroughly to administer such an enormous area as Liberia and the European colonies in

1. The Labour Party 'Memo on the Issues of the War' (London August 1917),pp.67.

Tropical Africa without roads and railways. The I.L.P. thought that rather than try to create an international body to administer this area, it would be better if direct responsibility for the administration of divided areas of Africa were laid upon individual European States under the supervision of an International Commission.[1] However, in the 'Labour Leader',[2] Philip Snowden wrote that the I.L.P. should welcome the Labour party memo and emphasise points of agreement in the interests of peace rather than to criticise its defects.

The Labour party's statement on war issues formed the basis of discussion at the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist conference which met in London from February 20 - 23, 1918. The conference had been called by the Labour party and the T.U.C. Separate representation was refused to the I.L.P. and the British Socialist Party. The Labour party's document was toned down by the conference, 'turned upside down' according to Taylor.[3] There was a shift of emphasis towards the I.L.P. position. The Memo on War Aims, prepared by the Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference, declared that the colonies of the belligerents should be placed under a system of control established by international agreement under the League of Nations. This would respect national sovereignty but would also be inspired by broad conceptions of economic freedom and concerned to safeguard the rights of the 'natives' under the best conditions possible for them and, in particular, it would take account in each locality of the wishes of the people, expressed in the form

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1. Note by the I.L.P. on the 'Memo on War Issues' by the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, p.4.
2. 'Labour Leader', 3 January 1918.
3. A.J.P.Taylor, op.cit., p.141.

which was possible for them. The interests of the 'native' tribes as regards ownership of the soil should be maintained and the whole of the revenues should be devoted to the well being and development of the colonies themselves.[1] The main difference between this statement and the Labour party's original document was that the Inter-Allied one was only going to put the colonies of the 'belligerent' nations under international supervision. These colonies would not be governed by an international body as the Labour party had suggested but by countries under the supervision of the League of Nations. This scheme was more practical but less altruistic. Philip Snowden thought that the cardinal fault of the new memo was that its proposals were based upon 'the assumption that the fruits of capitalism and imperialism which have been gathered by the Allied Powers may be justly retained, and that only those fruits in the possession of the Central Powers must be disgorged in order to ensure the future peace of the world.'[2]

The Labour party was prone, as Robinson states, to 'recurrent propaganda for the internationalisation of colonial responsibilites under the League of Nations'.[3] The more pragmatic Inter-Allied Conference thought that colonies should continue under the administration of separate nations, only being supervised by the League, rather than being administered by the League. It is surprising that the Labour party's original document containing the radical idea of administering the African colonies by the League of Nations was written by MacDonald, Henderson and Webb who were later to

1. Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference, 'Memo on War Aims', (1918),p.3.
2. 'Labour Leader', 7 March 1918, p.1.
3. K. Robinson, 'The Dilemmas of Trusteeship' (Oxford University Press, 1965)p.56.

pursue much less radical policies in the African colonies. E.D. Morel probably influenced their attitude towards the African colonies. In 1917 he wrote a book and a pamphlet on Africa and the peace settlement. The conclusion of his book[1] was that 'the neutralisation of the non-colonisable area of Africa, the internationalisation of European commercial activities within that area and such a distribution of territorial sovereignty as would secure to Germany a participation commensurate alike with her past achievements in Africa, and with her economic needs - these, one would suppose, are the aims which an enlightened statesmanship might be expected to pursue.'[2]

In a U.D.C. pamphlet, 'Africa and the Peace Settlement', Morel wrote that the greater part of Africa was not suitable for colonisationby the white races because they could not live in it. European administration in the non-colonisable parts of Africa should be inspired by a sense of trusteeship, the basic principles of which were the preservation of the land for the peoples, preservation of 'native' institutions, preservation of the principle of trade, regulation of trade to prevent monopolies, the abolition of differential tariffs and the encouragement of 'native' industries. He thought that the working classes of Europe would suffer if they remained indifferent to the claims of the producing classes of Africa. The main basis of policy should be to ensure that the African retained his land because then he could not be made into a wage slave for the Europeans. Morel wanted a common international policy for Africa, a charter of 'native'

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1. E.D. Morel, 'Africa and the Peace of Europe' (National Labour Press, London 1917).
2. ibid,p.115. By 'non-colonisable', Morel seems to have meant the African colonies which were not suitable for white settlement.

rights and a general international procedure which would preserve the African peoples from being precipitated into war owing to the stupid and immoral rivalries endangered by the Imperialistic ambitions of their rulers, and by the passion for getting rich speedily at the expense of weaker races.[1]

These ideas were to form the basis of Labour policy for Africa-trusteeship for the African, preservation of their land, internationalisation of European commercial activities and international supervision of European administration, the abolition of differential tariffs and the pursuit of a policy of free trade. This was a liberal policy with its emphasis on free trade, internationalisation, 'native' rights and charters. It was reformist rather than revolutionary, there was going to be no immediate independence for the colonial empire but it was going to be reformed to benefit the African inhabitants. However, Morel had not, at that stage, addressed himself, in detail, to the problem of what to do in the territories where there were white settlers. This was to prove a major problem later.

The Labour party produced its first comprehensive policy statement in 1918, 'Labour and the New Social Order' which was drafted by Sidney Webb and Arthur Henderson. A conference was held in June 1918 under Henderson's new constitution and the statement was formally adopted by the party. As Pelling writes, this policy document 'formed the basis of Labour party policy for over thirty years'.[2] The section on colonial policy rejected both the 'Little Englander' and imperialist approaches to colonial problems:

1. E.D. Morel, 'The African Problem and the Peace Settlement' (U.D.C., London, 1917)
2. H. Pelling, op.cit., p.44.

"If we repudiate, on the one hand the imperialism that seeks to dominate other races, or to impose our will on other parts of the British Empire, so we disclaim equally any conception of selfish and insular 'Non-interventionism' unregarding of our special obligations to our fellow citizens overseas; of the corporate duties of one nation to another; of the moral claim upon us of the non-adult races; and our indebtedness to the world of which we are a part.....With regard to the great commonwealth of all races, all colours, all religions and all degrees of civilisation that we call the British Empire, the Labour party stands for its maintenance and progressive development on the lines of local autonomy and 'Home Rule All Round'; the fullest respect for the rights of each people, whatever its colour, to all the Democratic self-government of which it is capable and to the proceeds of its own toil upon the resources of its own territorial home; the closest possible co-operation among all the various members of what has become essentially not an Empire in the old sense, but a Britannic Alliance, and especially in India, is the continuous participation of the Ministers of the Dominions, of India, and eventually of the other dependencies in the most confidential deliberations of the Cabinet, so far as Foreign policy and Imperial Affairs are concerned; and the annual assembly of an Imperial Council representing all constituents of the Britannic Alliance and all parties in their local legislation which should discuss all matters of common interest, but only in order to make recommendations for simultaneous consideration of the various autonomous local legislatures of what should increasingly take the constitutional form of an Alliance of Free Nations."[1]

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1. Labour Party, 'Labour and the New Social Order' (London, 1918), pp.21-2

As Goldsworthy points out, these were orthodox liberal themes; 'moral obligation, the prevention of exploitation and domination and progress towards self-government'.[1] The idea of continuous participation of the Ministers of the Dominions in the most confidential deliberations of the Cabinet on foreign policy and imperial affairs seemed to savour of early Fabian imperialism and the influence of Milner on Webb. However, this idea was soon dropped and it never again found a place in an official party document. This declaration of policy showed that the Labour party had decided to adopt a policy of careful reform aiming at eventual self-government but there was no indication of the time scale envisaged. The Empire was regarded as something that could be made into a force for racial co-operation. Hardie's idea that the empire represented 'capitalism in its most predatory and militant phase'[2] was ignored. Reform rather than abandonment was to be the policy of the Labour party for the empire. As might be expected from Sidney Webb the policy was evolutionary rather than revolutionary. It read well as a list of aspirations, but the problem was in making the aspirations a reality.

The Labour party conference of June 1918 which discussed the policy statement 'Labour and the New Social Order' did not discuss the section on colonial policy, indicating the low priority which was attached to the subject. The previous conference in January 1918 had not discussed colonial affairs as such but had passed a resolution on India, urging the 'Labour members to do all in their power to bring pressure on the present government, without undue delay, in order that

1. D. Goldsworthy, 'Colonial Issues in British Politics 1945-61' (Oxford, 1971)pp.117-8
2. Quoted in W. Stewart, 'The Life of Keir Hardie',p.154.

these people shall be given their just rights, which have been due to them throughout all time, including the right to self-government.'[1] The Labour party thought that India should be given self-government but it considered that the colonies of Africa were not yet ready for it. The Indians were regarded as at a higher stage of development than the Africans. One of the problems with the party's policy towards Africa was that many in the party regarded the Africans as inferiors. There was no indication that many members of the party thought that Africans could ever be equal to the white man.

The 1918 General Election manifesto gave the briefest of mentions to colonial and imperial problems - 'The principles which Labour acclaims as Allied war aims, it will apply to our own subject peoples, and it will extend to all subject peoples the right of self-determination within the British Commonwealth of Free Nations.'[2] This declaration seemed very radical but again no time scale was mentioned for extending to all subject peoples the right of self-determination. Self-determination for the African colonies was to be for the future rather than the present.

In the reorganisation of the party machine that took place at the end of the war, advisory committees were set up to provide expert information and advice for the National Executive Committee. An International Advisory Committee was set up to deal with International and imperial problems. This committee set up a sub-committee on 8 January 1919 on the Crown Colonies and Dependencies with special reference to 'Africa and the treatment of the natives.'[3] The

1. Labour Party Conference Report, January 1918, p.138.
2. Labour Party, 'Labour's Call to the People' (1918 manifesto)
3. Labour Party, International Advisory Committee Minutes, 8 January 1919.

membership of this committee consisted of C.R. Buxton, H.N. Brailsford, Lowes Dickinson, Major Gillespie, Captain Stocks, Delisle Burns, Sidney Webb, Leonard Woolf, G.D.H. Cole and Duncan Hall. Buxton and Brailsford had been on the Executive Committee of the U.D.C., Dickinson, Cole and Hall were academics, Sidney Webb was the founder of the Fabian Society and Leonard Woolf was a Fabian who had served in the colonial civil service. The others played a less important role on the committee. This committee was expanded into a sub-committee on Imperial Questions on 13 February 1920. The membership of this committee consisted of J.C. Wedgwood, C.R. Buxton, N. Buxton, J.L. Stocks, H. Duncan Hall, Ben Spoor, Bernard Shaw, J. Scurr, Dr. N. Leys, L.S. Woolf, Sir S. Olivier, J.R. MacDonald and A.J. Toynbee.[1] However, this expanded committee did not last very long and at the end of 1920 there was a reconstruction of the advisory committees and the sub-committee was merged back into the Advisory Committee on International Questions. A separate committee on Imperial questions was not again constituted until 6 February 1924, when, on E.D. Morel's suggestion, an Imperial sub-committee was appointed with the power to co-opt members and send memoranda direct to the National Executive Committee.[2] In January 1925 this committee attained full and permanent status as the Advisory Committee on ImperialQuestions. The membership of this committee consisted of N. Angell, Captain Bennett, Dr. E. Bentham, H.N. Brailsford, C.R. Buxton, G. Lowes Dickinson, J.H. Harris, W.H. Hutchinson, S. Saklatvala, J. Lawson M.P., E.D. Morel M.P., J. Scurr M.P.,

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1. I.A.C. Minutes, 13 February 1920.
2. I.A.C. Minutes, 6 February 1924.
There was no Trade Union member of the committee at this stage.

T. Smith M.P., H. Snell M.P., Ben Spoor M.P., Lt.-Col. T.S.B. Williams M.P., and L.S. Woolf was the secretary. N. Leys and MacGregor Ross, experts on Africa, were soon asked to join the committee.

The task of the Advisory committees, according to Leonard Woolf, was to try to dissipate the 'profound and almost universal ignorance of international and imperial facts and problems' which existed among both the leaders and the rank and file of the Labour movement.[1] The people who were to make most impact on the Labour party's colonial policy were Leonard Woolf, C.R. Buxton, J.C. Wedgwood, E.D. Morel, Sir S. Olivier, Dr. N. Leys, H.N. Brailsford, Ben Spoor, H. Snell and J. Scurr.

Leonard Woolf was secretary of both the International Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. He was regarded by the Webbs as 'the expert' on international and imperial questions. He was an ex-civil servant whose experience of the Colonial civil service in Ceylon had made him dislike imperialism with its relationships of dominant to subject peoples.[2] He resigned from the civil service in 1911 and wrote books for the Fabian Society on 'International Government' and 'Empire and Commerce in Africa'. The latter was an important source of the Labour party's colonial policy.

In 'Empire and Commerce in Africa',[3] Woolf discussed the general effect of economic imperialism in Europe, on the one hand, and in Africa and Asia, on the other. Woolf thought that it was extremely doubtful whether the possession of an African Empire had added to the power of any European

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1. L. Woolf, 'Downhill All the Way' (London, 1967), pp.218-9
2. ibid, p.222
3. L.S. Woolf, 'Empire and Commerce in Africa' (London, 1920)

state; it certainly had not added to their wealth. The budgets of all European states showed that they had always, as states, an expenditure which exceeded their revenue in Africa. Colonial policy was made by a small set of men who were set in motion by small groups of financiers, traders and capitalists who were seeking economic ends in Africa. There was no actual corruption but the governing group was subject to persistent and powerful pressure to which it eventually yielded. The policy pursued by Britain in East Africa was shaped by the British East Africa Company which had invisible lines from the boardroom to 'The Times', the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Church of Scotland and the establishment generally. So long as the policies of European states continued to be dominated by economic imperialism and directed to profit-making there could be no international peace or security.

Woolf examined the question of whether economic imperialism prevented unemployment and depression in Britain. He concluded that the British possessions on the East coast of Africa were of negligible importance to British industry either as a source of raw materials or as a market for manufacturers. It was obvious that a population where wages were between £2 and £3 a year would never provide a market for the products of European industry. A few capitalists had made or lost money but generally trade, industry and labour had reaped no advantages.

The general effect of European policy in Africa, according to Woolf, had been almost wholly evil. 'The European went into Africa about forty years ago desiring to exploit it and its inhabitants for his own economic advantage and he rapidly acquired the belief that the power of the state

should be used in Africa to promote his own economic interests.'[1] By force or fraud the African chiefs were swindled or robbed of their dominions. Even if the European had given to the African the gift of law and order this was no justification for a system of conquest, partition and economic exploitation. Nevertheless, Woolf thought that in the position reached there would be no improvement if Europeans abandoned Africa. The major problem was how the administration of the European state could be changed from an instrument of economic exploitation into an instrument of progress for the Africans. One answer was to try to place the relations of European states in 'non-adult' countries on a foundation of co-operation rather than hostility by working through the League of Nations. Another was to change the beliefs and desires of Europeans in Africa with regard to the Africans. The African should be regarded as an end in himself rather than an instrument of other people's ends. The ultimate beliefs and desires which had to be changed were economic and social and were part of the capitalist system. The passion for buying cheap and selling dear was the fundamental cause of the African problem. The substitution of international control for national imperialism might only result in exploitation being carried on by an international rather than a national body. Woolf was forced to the conclusion that the economic beliefs and desires of Europeans would have to undergo a change before European administration could become an instrument for good in Africa.

The Europeans should continue in Africa as trustees for the African population. Their duty was to promote the political, social and economic interests of the Africans. In

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1. L.S. Woolf, 'Empire and Commerce in Africa' (London, 1920) p.352.

order to do this the land should be reserved for the Africans, they should be given systematic education and gradually Europeans and their capitalist enterprises should be expropriated. All revenue raised should be used for the development of the country and the education, health and well being of the African population. There should be an absolute prohibition of alcohol and Africa should be neutralised in international affairs. However, it was 'ridiculous to imagine that Europe can or will rule the forests of Africa in accordance with themaxims of Christ and the sermon on the mount and at the same time apply to Paris, London and Berlin the doctrines of Machiavelli and Bismarck and the ideals of the market and the stock exchange.'[1] There would have to be a revolution in men's beliefs and desires in order to substitute the idea of trusteeship for that of ownership and exploitation. There would have to be an acceptance of the ideal and system of international trusteeship. This could be done by international commissions administering the territories in the interests of the Africans (as had been suggested in the Labour party's memo on war issues) but Woolf thought that this idea was probably too idealistic and the most practical solution was for the League to formally declare its trusteeship of the 'non-adult' races and then proceed to hand them over to particular states as its mandatories. However, Woolf feared that this would mean that everything would remain exactly as before since it was improbable that the trustee would be particularly hampered by its mandate. The old system might operate under a new name.

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1. L.S. Woolf, op.cit., p.363.

It was essential that the trustee's obligations were defined in a treaty guaranteed by the League which would have a powerful organ to supervise the execution of treaty obligations and which would guarantee absolute equality of commercial opportunity by means of free trade and the open door. The League should possess the power to revoke a mandate if the mandatory power did not fulfil its obligations. Unless the League created means for ensuring that mandatory nations fulfilled their obligations it would be powerless. Woolf's ideas were radical and non-marxist. He did not believe that the economic system should be changed in order to alter men's beliefs, he thought that men's beliefs should alter in order that the economic system of exploitation should change. Woolf's ideas were based on a humanitarian appeal to reason. There would have to be a change but it should be brought about by persuasion and reason rather than by violence or force. He placed his emphasis on a policy of 'trusteeship' over the Africans.

Concerning the other members of the A.C.I.Q., C.R. Buxton was a member of a family which had been prominent in the anti-slavery movement of the nineteenth century. Educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge, he entered the House of Commons in 1910 as a Liberal. Throughout the war he was an active member of the U.D.C., joining the I.L.P. in 1917. In 1922 he was elected as a Labour member of Parliament.

Josiah Wedgwood was another Liberal member of a famous family who joined the I.L.P. in 1919. He spent a period in South Africa during the Boer war and then as a government administrator. Throughout his career he was an enthusiastic proponent of a land tax which he regarded as a solution to most economic ills. E.D. Morel was another Liberal convert.

He founded the Congo Reform Association in 1904 and worked for the elimination of abuses in the treatment of the Africans in the Congo Free State. He was adopted as a Liberal candidate in 1912 but his opposition to the war led to the resignation of his candidacy. As secretary of the U.D.C., he was one of the most prominent critics of Britain's participation in the war and in 1917 was imprisoned under D.O.R.A.[I] He became a member of the I.L.P. in March 1918 and from 1922 until his death in 1924 was a Labour M.P.

Sir Sydney Olivier was one of the founders of the Fabian Society and one time Governor of Jamaica. He became Secretary of State for India in the first Labour government and was the author of the important book 'White Capital and Coloured Labour', which discussed the exploitation of the black man by white capital. In the 1920s he wrote articles on colonial affairs for the 'New Statesman'.

Norman Leys had practised medicine for 20 years in Portuguese and British Africa. In 1910, sympathising with African grievances, he gathered material for a book exposing the details of European exploitation. In 1918 he returned to England having grown more and more critical of the settlers. He became a fierce critic of the settlers in Kenya, writing many books and articles on East Africa. He was a fierce believer in a policy of 'equal rights' for the Africans. This meant that all discriminatory legislation should be abolished and all Africans should have the franchise on the same terms as white settlers. Throughout the interwar period, Leys fought to commit the Labour party to emphasise the 'equal rights' policy rather than the trusteeship policy, which was supported by Woolf and Morel.

H.N. Brailsford was an executive member of the U.D.C.

I.Defence of the Realm Act.

during the war. He had been a member of the I.L.P. since 1907, and edited the I.L.P. newspaper 'The New Leader', 1922-26.

Ben Spoor was a member of the I.L.P. He was one of Labour's main spokesmen in the House of Commons on Colonial and Imperial Affairs. Harry Snell was another I.L.P. member who became one of Labour's leading spokesmen in the Commons. He was secretary of the Labour Commonwealth Group of M.P.s for seven years. J. Scurr was a member of the I.L.P. He wrote articles on colonial policy and belonged to the Home Rule for India movement.

These men were the main framers of the Labour party's colonial policy in the twenties. In 1918, the members of the Advisory Committee on international questions were slightly cut off from the predominantly trade unionist Parliamentary Labour party. Nevertheless, the International Advisory Committee produced a stream of memoranda which it sent up to the National Executive Committee. One of the major issues that occupied the International Advisory Committee was the question of Africa and the peace settlement. There was the problem of what to do with Germany's colonies. As has been shown, the Labour party had advocated international administration but this had been toned down at the Inter-Allied conference to the idea of international supervision of mandatories. In September 1918, the International Advisory Committee prepared a statement on its attitude to the Peace Conference. It was a combination of the Labour party's memo on the issues of the war and the Inter-Allied statement. The I.A.C. memo stated that the Inter-Allied 'Memo on War Aims' had laid down four policy proposals which should be applied to all colonies and dependencies

of all countries; - (1) The Peace Conference should secure to the 'natives' effective protection against the excesses of capitalist colonisation. Home Rule should be granted to all groups of people that had attained a certain degree of civilisation and there should be progressive participation in local government for all the others. (2) Colonies captured during the war should not be an obstacle to peace but should be a subject of special consideration at the Peace Conference. (3) There should be economic equality for the peoples of all nations in such territories. (4) For sub-tropical Africa a system of control should be established by international agreement under the League of Nations and maintained by its guarantee which, while leaving each colony as at present under the sovereignty of a European Power, would safeguard economic freedom and the rights of the 'natives'. In order to promote this policy the Labour party would have to secure three separate points;- economic freedom innon-adult possessions (i.e. in all colonies and possessions other than self-governing colonies), the political, economic and social rights of nations in such possessions and a settlement of the question of the captured German colonies. The Labour party programme implied that a settlement of these points should be by international agreement under the supervision and guarantee of a League of Nations.[1]

There was considerable discussion of these questions in the Labour press. 'The New Statesman' discussed 'The League and the German Colonies' on 1 February 1919. It mentioned the Labour party's memo on the issues of the war and its plan that all the colonies of the belligerents should be brought under the common sway of the League of Nations and Smuts' idea that

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1. International Advisory Committee, 'The Colonies' (September, 1918)

they should be transferred to one or other of the victorious white states to govern. The writer seemed to be in favour of the latter idea with the white governments as 'mandatories' exercising a 'trust' while the League of Nations stood by with permanent machinery to enforce the mandate.[1]

Sir Sydney Olivier, writing in the 'Labour Leader' thought that the inhuman and insane barbarities of Germany's rule in all her African colonies made it impossible for any World Conference to propose to reinstate her. He thought that control should be kept on behalf of the Society of Nations over the principles of administration in all such territories to secure the rights and welfare of the 'natives', but immediate sovereignty ought to be vested in one single national authority. A Charter of the liberties and rights of primitive peoples everywhere should be drawn up. The Peace Conference should provide, and the League of Nations guarantee, the rights of the African populations. There should also be free access, subject to the rights of the Africans, to the peoples of all civilised nations.[2]

In the same paper, Philip Snowden wrote of reports that German colonies in Africa were to be handed over to South Africa, Japan and Australia as 'trustees'. Snowden thought that there could be no assurance of world peace if a few countries were given the right to exploit the rich tropical and semi-tropical parts of the earth to the exclusion of equal opportunities for all nations.[3] Travers Buxton and J.H. Harris, secretaries of the Anti-Slavery and

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1. 'New Statesman', 1 February 1919, p.363
2. 'Labour Leader', 7 November 1918, p.5.
3. ibid., 6 February 1919, p.1.

Aborigines Protection Society were apprehensive that pressure was being exerted on chiefs and tribes to come under a given mandatory when they had a firm desire to come under another mandatory power.[1]

The 'New Statesman' believed that the terms of the mandate were vital. The value of the trust deed would depend entirely on the means adopted for its observance. Would there be a guarantee that the grievances of 'natives' against members of the League would receive attention? What remedy would the 'natives' have and who would be responsible for setting it in motion? Would it be reasonably cheap or would it be the luxury of wealth? The paper thought that something analogous to the Privy Council was needed to which appeals could be made.[2]

The League of Nations Covenant placed the German colonies as mandates under the administrationof the victorious powers who were to act as 'Trustees' under the supervision of the League of Nations. As Winkler writes, the Labour party was disappointed with the Covenant.[3] The party disapproved the plans for the mandate system and suspected the motives of the supporters of the system. The Permanent Commission of the Labour and Socialist International met at Lucerne between 1-9 August 1919 and passed a resolution on the colonies. (The Labour party wasstrongly represented at the International.) The motion stated that 'as regards the Colonies, the International declares that upon the question of principle it maintains the point of view

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1. ibid., 26 June 1919.
2. 'New Statesman', 9 August 1919,p.40.
3. H.R. Winkler, 'The Emergence of a Labour Foreign Policy in Great Britain, 1918-1929' Journal of Modern History, vol.28, no.2 (1956)pp248-9
'Labour and the Peace Treaty', (The Labour Party, 1919)
A. Henderson, 'The Peace Terms', (London,1919)

of past international Congresses on the right of indigenous populations and the illegitimacy of exploitation of colonies by the capitalism of the Great Powers, but since the colonial system continues to exist the International declares that the Peace Conference ought not to have deprived Germany of its colonies. It is both an injustice and a mistake; an injustice, because the other nations cannot very well claim moral superiority for their administration; a mistake, because they deprive Germany of the possibility of economic development at the very moment when certain parts of her territory have legitimately been taken from her and restored to their original national communion and when heavy indemnities are being exacted from her for reparation of damage done. Taking account, however, of the actual situation created by the mandatory system adopted by the Peace Conference, the International declares that the following principles should be observed in every case on the revision of Article 19 of the Covenant: - (1) Equality of economic opportunity in all non-self-governing colonies should be assured under the League of Nations. (2) All such colonies and not merely the conquered German colonies should be subject to the mandatory principle. (3) The mandates should be granted by the League of Nations, not by the Allies. The conquered colonies should be ceded to the League of Nations, not to the Allies. (4) Germany should be afforded an opportunity to become a mandatory of her former colonies under the League of Nations.[1] The Labour party supported the motion, believing that all colonies should be administered as a trust. All colonies should become 'mandates' under the League of Nations, not just the German colonies.

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1. Labour Party Nineteenth Annual Conference Report, 1919, Appendix XV, p.224.

However, in an article in the 'Socialist Review', Norman Leys wondered how socialists could give their support 'to that instrument of treachery to a peace-loving world, the League of Nations.' He believed that the League was a useless remedy in the critical situation reached in some countries in East Africa where the Africans had no political rights and were forced to work for the Europeans. The spread of education was sowing the seeds of rebellion among more Africans every year. The covenant's only value would be that it would prove incontestably the moral bankruptcy of the capitalist world order. Leys thought that capitalism was near its end in Europe and when it did collapse 'the testing time for thewhole Socialist movement will come'; the workers would be offered a share in the profits of the spoliation of Asiatics and Africans. British Socialists had a particular duty because no other country governed so many of the unfree. Britain's fate hung upon the wisdom she showed in guiding the future of half the world.[1] Leys was emphasising the situation in East Africa where there were white settlers who were 'exploiting' the Africans. He was trying to focus the Labour party's attention on this problem. It was to develop into the party's main concern during the interwar period.

The 'Socialist Review' also published a letter from an English resident in Tanganyika stating that the country was worse off as a mandate of Britain than it had been under German rule.[2] Leys feared that the League of Nations seemed to be a continuation of the old system under a new name. Although the Labour party was critical of the annexation of the German colonies it did favour the internationa-

1. N. Leys, 'The Tropics and the League of Nations', Socialist Review, vol.118, No.96, Jan-March 1921, pp.68-78.
2. 'Socialist Review', No.100, January 1922, pp.51-2

lisation of colonial responsibilities.

Leonard Woolf wrote a pamphlet on 'Mandates and the Empire', which was to prove influential in the development of Labour policy. In this, he stated that there were two different systems in operation in Africa. On the West Coast the African retained the land but in British East Africa the land had been alienated from the Africans and they were faced with the alternative of starvation or of working for a few pence a day on the land which belonged to them but which the white man had expropriated. The League of Nations should lay down minimum standards for mandatory powers. These should be that the land should be the property of the African, every African should be assured sufficient land for his support, African rights in and occupancy of land should receive legal sanction, leases to Europeans should only be for short periods with the consent of the African communities, the government should re-enter where land had been alienated to Europeans on such a scale that it was impossible for the African to have sufficient for his support. All compulsory or forced labour should be abolished. Primary schools should be provided for every African child to obtain primary education and training colleges should be provided for African teachers. The Mandate should specifically state the obligation of the mandatory government to encourage and educate the Africans in the most economic use of their land. Local self-government should be encouraged. The League should lay down the form of goverment to be applied in each area and should reserve to itself full and adequate powers of supervision. These principles should be applicable to the treatment of all subject races. Their government should be treated as a 'trust' for civilisation.[1] The

1. L.S. Woolf, 'Mandates and Empire' (London, 1920)

Labour party adopted this idea at a special congress called to discuss the League of Nations Covenant. The duties imposed on the mandatory powers should also apply to all other colonial powers in their relations with subject peoples.

A motion was passed stating that "the provisions and obligations of Article 19, referring to Colonies and Native Territories, be applied to all peoples in the position of those dealt with in the Article, and that the Article be strengthened by protecting the natives from exploitation by the alienation of lands, or destruction of customs which secure the economic liberty of the people."[1]

There was a need for a more detailed policy towards the colonies. In an article in the 'Socialist Review', John Scurr wrote that the I.L.P. could not afford to neglect the problems of the Empire. 'We have to have a colonial policy which will have for its end precisely the same goal as our domestic policy. We have to have a colonial labour policy which will be directed towards putting the labouring classes of the coloured races on their feet, so that first of all they may be free and independent, and secondly, which will remove the competition of their labour.'[2] Capitalism should not be allowed to employ coloured labour in competition to white, thereby reducing the white workers' standard of life. The standard of living of the Africans should be protected to ensure that the cheap competition of their labour did not upset the British workers' standard of living. This meant pressing for higher wages for indigenous African labour. The trade union movement took up this

1. Report of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, 1918-1919, p.25.
2. J. Scurr, 'Thoughts on I.L.P. Policy', Socialist Review, vol.16, No.91, p.363.

attitude; later its interest in colonial affairs was mainly to ensure that British workers' living standards did not suffer. As Africa became more industrialised in the 1930s the trade unions took more interest in colonial problems. However, apart from passing one or two resolutions at Congress, the trade union movement largely ignored colonial problems in the 1920s.

The sub-committee on the government of the Crown Colonies and Dependencies tried to work out a Labour policy for the colonies. The committee was greatly concerned with the question of African land. The committee considered that the British South African Company which was administering Southern Rhodesia should have its charter revoked because it had failed to observe African law and custom in dealing with African land rights; the Africans had suffered considerable expropriation of land rights and had revolted in 1896. The committee recommended that Africans should be given secure titles to all reserves: those who could show occupancy for 20 years should be given an unalienable title to the land, taxes should be imposed on Africans for administrative purposes only and, pending a land settlement, all evictions of Africans should be immediately stopped.[1] The committee sent a memo to the National Executive Committee to this effect and it was decided to send a deputation to the Prime Minister in order to secure justice for the dispossessed Africans of Southern Rhodesia. The P.M. was unable to receive the deputation, including Tom Shaw M.P., Ben Spoor M.P., Josiah Wedgwood M.P., C.R. Buxton and L.S. Woolf, but it put its points to Lord Milner instead.[2]

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1. Labour Party Advisory Committees Monthly Report, April 1919.
2. N.E.C. Minutes, 20 April 1920.

Later, as will be shown, Lord Passfield, a Labour Colonial Secretary, made the situation worse in Southern Rhodesia by approving segregation of land.

The sub-committee on Crown Colonies was also concerned at the vagueness of the draft Covenant of the League of Nations in respect to African land rights in territories to be handed over to mandatory states. The Committee passed a resolution on the question which it submitted to the N.E.C. It recommended that the principles which had been applied in Nigeria, where the African retained the land, should be applied to the rest of Africa. (1) The whole of the lands, whether occupied or unoccupied, should be declared African lands. (2) All African lands should be administered by the mandatory state for the benefit and use of the Africans and no title to the occupation and use of any such land should be valid without the consent of the League of Nations. (3) The League of Nations and the mandatory state should have regard to African laws and customs in the existing district in which the land was situated.[1] This resolution was presented to the N.E.C. by C.D. Burns and Leonard Woolf.

The main task of the sub-committee was to work out a policy statement for Africa. This was delegated to Leonard Woolf and E.D. Morel. As Morel later wrote, he and Woolf virtually drew up the African policy for the Labour Party.[2] C.R. Buxton also later paid tribute to the very great part that E.D. Morel played in the composition of the first edition of the party's policy on Africa.[3] On the 30 January 1920, the pamphlet produced by Morel and Woolf was circulated to

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1. International Advisory Committee Minutes, 18 March 1919.
2. E.D. Morel to J.H. Thomas, C.O.533 file 34378, June 1924, (C.O./533/320)
3. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1933, p.201.

the full International Advisory Committee[1] and, on 13 February, it was approved for publication[2] and was subsequently published as 'The Empire in Africa, Labour's Policy'.[3]

The pamphlet was an amalgamation of the ideas of Morel and Woolf. The main theme of the pamphlet was the same as had been outlined in Woolf's 'Mandates and the Empire'; the Labour party should pursue the 'African' policy which was being pursued in West Africa rather than the 'European' policy which was followed in East Africa. The 'African' policy favoured the 'preservation of the 'native' rights in the land, assisting the 'native' population to develop the resources of the land by growing crops or gathering products for export'.[4] The 'European' policy favoured the economic development of the country by European syndicates and planters through 'hired' or forced labour'.[5] Labour's basic principles in Africa should be that there should be 'no economic exploitation of one class (native) by another class (white man)', and that the 'government must secure for the native the opportunity of developing, as a free man, the economic resources of the land for the benefit of the native communities!'[6] The general policy of Labour, applying these principles, ought to be that the land should be treated as the property of theAfrican community or communities, African rights in land and its products should be protected, alienation of land to African or European

1. I.A.C. Minutes 30 January 1920.
2. I.A.C. Minutes 13 February 1920.
3. 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy' (The Labour Party, 1920)
4. ibid, p.4.
5. ibid, p.7.
6. ibid, p.7.

should be prohibited and every African family should be assured sufficient land for its own support with security of tenure. Where a large capital outlay was required the government should supply the necessary capital and educate the Africans in the use of such machinery. Concessions of land to Europeans should take the form of short term leases and should only be granted after careful inquiry and with African approval; mineral products should be treated as the property of the local administration in trust for the communities; and mines, railways and any large-scale industries should be run by the state. Slavery should be prohibited and the use of compulsory labour should be banned except for schemes which would benefit the Africans and then only in accordance with African law and custom within the tribal areas. No labour contracts should be enforceable under the criminal law and all contracts should be made in the presence of a magistrate or a member of the administration. There should be no racial discrimination.

In order to put this policy into effect in East Africa, special provisions would be required. 'In order togive every native family sufficient land for its support, the government must, if necessary, re-enter upon alienated land. The government must take the power to cancel, revise or repurchase concessions of alienated land in order to provide land for the natives.'[1] The government should also stimulate village production in order to stem the disintegration of village life and generally improve the quality of labour. The development of tribal self-government should also be encouraged in whatever form the Africans wished. Labour should be free 'in fact as well as in name everywhere'. Turning to the question of government,

1. ibid, p.8.

the pamphlet stated that the Labour party's 'ultimate aim' was the establishment of genuine representation both for Africans on Native Councils and Indians on the Legislative Councils, and gradually the transfer of responsibility to these Legislative Councils, after education had spread and representation had been established. It was important that representation of the Africans should come on the Legislative Councils before responsibility was given to these Councils in order to prevent legislation in the interests of the exploiters. Responsibility should begin in the supervision of local government - sanitation, irrigation, roads and possibly education. Only after this experience had proved successful should responsible government be extended to wider areas.

Concerning international control, the pamphlet stated that the Peace Conference had adopted the principle, put forward by the Labour party, that the 'well-being' and development of the peoples of the African territories was a 'sacred trust of civilisation' and that European states administering African territories should be considered as trustees or mandatories answerable for their trust to the rest of the world. Although article 22 of the Covenant only applied the mandate system to the former German colonies, 'the implications of the mandate system and its honest fulfilment must be so important that it would not only be inconsistent but practically impossible for any state not to accept in non-mandated territory the same obligations as are accepted under the mandates'. 'The principle of trusteeship under a League of Nations cannot be arbitrarily confined to particular pieces of territory; it must be extended to cover all tropical Africa, and the

right of the community of nations to supervise the due carrying out by the trustee of the obligations of its trust must be frankly recognised.'[1]

In conclusion the pamphlet stated that education was of paramount importance in the development of this policy. It was proposed that in every dependency, primary education should be accessible to all children of school-going age, training colleges should be provided for teachers, and technical colleges should be established providing curriculum in the arts and sciences specially adapted to African territories. An African university should also be established and experimental and model farms should be provided to educate the Africans in the best use of their land. The education programme should aim at providing scientific agriculturists, forestry experts, doctors, sanitary officials and accountants rather than lawyers. The emphasis was on 'useful' skills rather than training for administration.

The ideas in this pamphlet seemed to be an expansion of Woolf's pamphlet on 'Mandates and Empire' and Morel's 'The African Problem and the Peace Settlement'. The idea that the government should re-enter alienated land and give it back to the Africans was a radical one. The pamphlet supported the mandate system but thought that it should be extended to cover the relations between all dominant and subject races. The idea of international administration of the African colonies which had been put forward in 1917 in the Labour party's 'memo on war Issues' was dropped. The policy of indirect rule was supported. It was thought that Local Government could be a useful training ground for

1. ibid, p.10.

the Africans. The main emphasis was placed on the idea of ruling the African territories as a 'trust' for civilisation until the Africans were eventually able to rule themselves. The Labour party had basically accepted the Fabian idea that it was the duty of more civilised nations to rule less civilised for the benefit of the 'non-adult' races and the world as a whole.

The policy outlined in this pamphlet was to remain the basis of Labour policy for Africa throughout the interwar period. Future statements of policy 'Labour and the Empire: Africa' (1926) and 'The Colonial Empire' (1933) were largely revisions of this pamphlet. The policy advocated was not revolutionary. The key to the advancement of the African was to be education. Independence was regarded as a goal but a far distant one. Lord Lugard, colonial administrator and author of 'The Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa', disagreed with the policy. He feared that the Labour party's research department had fallen under the influence of those who held narrow views and thought that the 'native' races had been mis-governed and robbed of their lands and their proper profits by the greed of exploiters. 'They would persuade the British democracy that it is better to shirk imperial responsibility, and relegate it to international committees; that the material development benefits only the capitalist profiteer; and that British rule over subject races stands for spoliation and self-interest. Guided by these advisors - some of the more prominent of whom are not even members of the British race - the Labour party has not hesitated to put forward its own thesis of government of tropical dependencies under the

Mandates.'[1] Despite this outburst, the Labour party's policy was not very different from the policy of the other parties. They also accepted the idea of 'trusteeship'.

The Labour party's policy was put forward in Parliament on 20 April 1920 by Ben Spoor and Josiah Wedgwood. The speeches were described as 'first-rate' by the 'Labour Leader'. Of Spoor's speech, the writer declared that 'not since Hardie had the House of Commons heard such a complete avowal of the solidarity of British Labour with the coloured peoples of the world.'[2]

Spoor stated the Labour party's general principles in regard to the question of the subject races. The first principle was to abolish all economic exploitation; the second was to educate the African so that he could take his place as a free man in the economic and political life of the country. The Labour party did not stand above the coloured man but stood along-side of him. The struggle of the coloured man was the struggle of labour the world over. Colonial policy should express the new spirit of freedom and equality, partly because it would make for stability and peace but mainly because it was right.

Colonel Wedgwood put forward what he considered to be the most important points of the pamphlet 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's policy'.[3] He stated that the Committee had been appointed by the Labour party 'to go into the colonial policy of the Labour Ministry if and when it is formed'. The Labour party would have nothing to do with the system of exploitation developed in East Africa but

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1. Lord Lugard, 'The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa' London, 5th ed. 1965) p.608.
2. 'Labour Leader', 6 May 1920, p.3.
3. 128 H.C.Deb., 5s., col.938ff., 20 April 1920

would leave the land in the communal tenure of the Africans or, as in Northern Nigeria, individual Africans with a permanent right of tenure. The Labour party's policy was that Africans should not be forced to work off their own land if they preferred to remain cultivating it. In East Africa the vote had been restricted to the whites; no votes had been given to the Africans or the Indians. It was the policy of the Labour party that there should be no colour bar - an educational franchise should be available for anyone who could qualify for it, so that everyone who stood for election would have to go to African and Indian voters and ask for their vote. However, Wedgwood did not want the whites to be 'swamped by uneducated people of another race'. The educational tests would therefore be stiff but the Africans would have a chance of coming in and it was only when they did come in to the electoral system that the Colonial Office could throw off its responsibilities for the Africans, and allow them to look after themselves. Wedgwood concluded by stating that the Labour party stood for an Empire extending to all colours, classes and peoples. They were not 'Little Englanders' but wanted a Commonwealth composed of many colours and classes. Wedgwood placed the emphasis on enabling the Africans to work on their own land. He was also a strong believer in the policy of 'equal rights' over the franchise. This policy was neglected when Labour came to power in 1924 and J.H. Thomas became Colonial Secretary.

J.H. Thomas put forward his interpretation of the ideas of the Advisory Committee in his book 'When Labour Rules'.[1] He considered that Britain's management of her colonies was

1. J.H.Thomas, 'When Labour Rules' (London, 1920)

perhaps more important than her relations with other countries. Concerning the question of land he stated that the Labour party would bring in acts of Parliament to make 'native' tenure secure. Labour would aim at the establishment of genuine representation of the 'natives' upon the councils and, as education progressed, a deepening of the responsibilities of Government.

The Labour press printed articles by E.D. Morel and Leonard Woolf putting forward some of the ideas expressed in their pamphlet. On 22 April 1920 the 'Labour Leader' printed a front page article by E.D. Morel in which he warned that the slave owner spirit was abroad in the colonies and that the full rights of man could not be secured by the European worker so long as he remained ignorant of, or was, at least, not vitally interested in the lot of non-European peoples.[1] Leonard Woolf wrote in the 'New Statesman' that since Britain held East Africa in trust it was the duty of the government to aid theAfrican by education and other means to make the best economic use of the land. On the West Coast the Africans had been successful and there was no reason to believe that what had been done in Gambia would be found beyond the power of the Africans in East Africa.[2] In another article, Woolf declared that British East Africa was a test case for imperialism in Africa. The system that was being imposed would prove disastrous for the British Empire. The final answer and complete disapproval of the theory that keeping the land for the white man and compulsory labour for the black man was the only economic system for Africa was to be found in British West Africa where the opposite system had succeeded.[3]

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1. 'Labour Leader' 22 April 1920,p.1.
2. 'New Statesman', 21 February 1920,pp.575-77
3. ibid, 10 April 1920,p.7.

The Empire was discussed at the 1920 Labour party conference. In his address the Chairman declared that the Labour party could not face the Labour Movements of other countries with clean hands unless it proclaimed in unmistakeable terms its attitude on the rights of subject peoples of the British Empire. 'When we go to future International Conferences we must go bearing a message from our workers that they are prepared to play their part, a part corresponding to the magnitude and power of Labour within the British Empire in the world-wide work of emancipation.'[1]

At the same conference a strong resolution on India was moved by Ben Spoor M.P. declaring that the conference reaffirmed its conviction that only on the basis of self-determination, with administrative protection for minorities, could any stable or satisfactory settlement of the world be arrived at. This principle was applicable to all peoples who showed themselves capable of expressing a common will. The motion continued that the government should satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the people of India and that corresponding measures should be taken in Burma and Ceylon and other parts of the British Empire in which self-government was demanded. It denied the right of any government to govern a country against the will of the majority; and while expressing the hope that all peoples of the British Empire would prefer to remain as parts of the Empire when their aspirations were dealt with in a conciliatory manner by the granting or adequate measures of autonomy, it declared that the final decision must rest with the people themselves.[2]

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1. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1920, p.113
2. ibid, p.156.

Imperialism was again discussed at the Twenty First Annual Conference held the next year in Brighton. R.C. Wallhead, the I.L.P. leader, moved a motion on 'war and imperialism'. This declared that 'imperialism distracts public attention from domestic affairs and introduces ideas of government by a dominant race which are inimical to the interests and alien to the principles of democracy and that it tends to perpetuate the reign of capitalism, not only by increasing the power of wealth, but by neglecting the home market and leaving the natural resources of the country undeveloped.'[1] The resolution concluded with a ringing assertion of the right to self-determination of all peoples and declared in favour of a foreign policy based upon the idea that all people should harmoniously co-operate to promote peace and liberty in the world and that all the resources of the world should be equally accessible to all nations. In supporting the motion, Wallhead stated that the Empire had not helped the common man and the sooner Britain got back to the state of Denmark which had no colonies the better it would be for everybody concerned. The day of Empires founded on force was over and the only chance of preserving the British Empire as a great force for good was that it should be established on the principle of a federation of free people, united to advance the democracies of the world. The resolution was unanimously carried. The fact that it was passed so easily suggests that the Labour party conference might have been prepared to accept a stronger policy than that put forward by the A.C.I.Q., whose policy had not been presented to conference for approval. There was no idea of returning 'to the state

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1. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1921, p.207.

of Denmark' in the Advisory Committee's pamphlet. However, the A.C.I.Q.'s policy was there for those who wanted to find it and it remained the basis of the Labour party's pronouncements on Africa during the interwar period. By the end of 1921, the Labour party had a colonial policy despite the 1921 resolution.

The party was strongly committed to the reform of the empire rather than its abolition. In domestic policy, the party was committed to reforming British society gradually by passing acts through Parliament rather than making violent revolution. The same gradualism was evident in colonial policy. The party adopted a policy of reform rather than abandonment of the empire. It was felt that some peoples of the empire were nearer to being 'adult' than others. The Indians were more highly regarded than the Africans who, it was felt, would have to wait a long while for self-government. Leys[1] thought that the time scale should be about twenty years. Most other people in the party thought this was too optimistic. C.R. Buxton thought it was 'ridiculous' to pretend that self-determination could be applied universally. A certain minimum of imperialism was inevitable.[2]

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1. Memo on Tropical Africa N.Leys (Buxton Papers, Box5/3)
2. Colonialism C.R. Buxton (ibid)

CHAPTER 3.

KENYA AND THE FIRST LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Kenya was to be a major subject of controversy during the interwar period. In 1921 there was a controversy over taxation. The settlers wished to raise the hut tax on the Africans but there were protests and the Colonial Office promised that hut tax would only be raised if an income tax were introduced for the whites. Hut tax was raised but the idea of an income tax was waived after white protest.[1] This led to a revolt by some Africans under the leadership of Harry Thuku. The revolt was crushed and Thuku was imprisoned.

Another problem concerning Kenya involved the Indians who lived there. The Indians were demanding equal rights with the white settlers who were unwilling to concede this and were prepared to use force to prevent the political advancement of the Indians. Speaking in the Commons in July 1922, in his 'best speech',[2] Colonel Wedgwood declared that the acid test of whether the British Empire was worthwhile was whether it set up a colour bar between Indian and European in Kenya. There should be a single, equal franchise; the alternative communal representation would lead to two social castes developing in a country with no common interest except fighting each other and struggling to get rival representation in the legislature.[3]

The General Election at the end of 1922 improved the Labour party's position in the House of Commons. It won 142 seats and became the official Opposition to the Conservatives. The manifesto had not devoted much space to colonial problems: 'Labour advocates the recognition of

1. 'New Statesman', 14 May 1921, p.151.
2. J.C. Wedgwood, 'Memoirs of a Fighting Life' (London, 1941), p.179.
3. 156 H.C.Deb., 5s., cols. 1137ff., 11 July 1922.

the real independence of Egypt and self-government for India. Labour demands the prompt and cordial acceptance of the new constitution of the Irish Free State and supports every effort to make Ireland united, prosperous and contented'.[1] There was no mention of Africa but the subject of Indians in Africa remained an important issue. There had been considerable discussion of the question in the Labour press. Leonard Woolf wrote that the whites were in favour of absolute refusal of the franchise to the Indians. 'It was fantastic that the Europeans could govern autocratically and exploit economically an African population which outnumbered them by three or four to one. The Africans were beginning to protest and organise and form associations. It was not Lenin, as the whites thought, who was responsible for the unrest but the policies that the whites were following.[2]

Norman Leys wrote in the 'Socialist Review' that the Europeans were organising a rebellion if there was any surrender by the government to the Indians. Indians were to be murdered when the signal was given. Indians had expressed sympathy with certain African grievances and the result had been a movement in the Kikuyu tribe which had ended with the arrest of its chief organiser, Harry Thuku, and the massacre of some 20 men and women out of an unarmed crowd waiting outside the jail in which he was confined. Leys thought that the Labour party should wholeheartedly support the Indian claims in Kenya.[3] His idea was that a policy of equal rights should be applied thoughout Africa.

In a subsequent article, Leys again stated that the

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1. Labour Party, 1922 General Election Manifesto.
2. 'New Statesman', 10 September 1921,p.615
3. 'Socialist Review', No.116,pp.205-212, May 1923.

Europeans were threatening armed rebellion if the government gave way over the Indian claims to land, the franchise and unrestricted immigration. Labour M.P.s, said Leys, should support the Indian claims and urge that the electoral roll in Kenya should include all Africans who on application were found to satisfy a strict educational test.[1] (Leys and Wedgwood were in agreement on this question.) In the 'New Leader' Leys[2] urged that the Europeans or the Indians should not be entrusted with the protection of the Africans. The latter should remain the responsibility of the Colonial Office until they could look after their own interests.

In July 1923, the Conservative Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Devonshire, published a White Paper on the subject of 'Indians in Kenya'.[3] This discussed the status of the Indians in Kenya and also made an important declaration of policy towards the Africans: "Primarily, Kenya is an African territory and H.M.G. think it necessary definitely to record their considered opinion that the interests of the African natives must be paramount, and that if, and when, those interests and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail....In the administration of Kenya H.M.G. regard themselves as exercising a trust on behalf of the African population, and they are unable to delegate or share this trust the object of which may be defined as the protection and advancement of the native races....there can be no room for doubt that it is the mission of Great Britain to work continuously for the training and education of the Africans towards a higher intellectual, moral and economic level than that which they

1. 'Socialist Review', No.120, Sept.1923, pp.129-133
2. 'New Leader' 25 May 1923
3. 'Indians in Kenya', Cmd. 1922, July 1923.

had reached when the Crown assumed the responsibility for the administration of this territory. At present special consideration is being given to economic development in the native reserves, and within the limits imposed by the finances of the colonies all that is possible for the advancement of the Africans, both inside and outside the reserves, will be done."[1]

This was a statement that many in the Labour party would have agreed with. Both parties officially adopted the policy of 'trusteeship'. The differences were over how the 'trusteeship' would be exercised. There was disagreement over the question of the treatment of the Indians. One of the points at issue was whether Indian representation on the Legislative Council should be on a common electoral roll or by a communal franchise. The Conservative government decided in favour of the communal franchise because it meant that every elector would have the opportunity of being represented by a member with sympathies similar to his own and, as far as the Africans were concerned, it provided a framework into which African representation could be fitted 'in due season'. The White Paper stated that the government was going to continue the policy of reserving land in the Highlands to Europeans (a policy which the Indians had protested about) but an area of land would be temporarily set aside to ascertain what demand for land there was by the Indians. Concerning the subject of Indians' immigration into Kenya, the White Paper declared that it was 'evident to H.M.G. that some further control over immigration in the interests of the natives of Kenya is required. The primary duty of the colonial government is the advancement of the African, and it is incumbent upon them to protect him from an influx of immigrants from any country that might tend to retard his

1. ibid, p.10.

economic development.'[1]

Colonel Wedgwood, speaking as Labour's spokesman in the Commons on colonial questions, attacked the policies that the White Paper had put forward concerning the Indians.[2] He thought that the policies proposed might satisfy the European settlers because they were a surrender to them, but they would never satisfy the Indians so long as the Indians were expected to be members of the British Empire. He thought that the re-opening of the immigration question would exacerbate the racial struggle which had done so much to harm Kenya. However, his main disagreement with the Government was over the question of the franchise. It was a point which vitally interested every Indian, not only the Indians in Kenya. The Government had given way to pressure from the white community to place the Indians on a separate communal franchise. The white settlers had threatened to secede from the Empire; planned to kidnap the Governor, and appealed to South Africa. The Government had been effectively brought to their knees by 9,000 settlers. The Indians did not want a separate roll under which they would be considered C3 citizens and be placed in a permanently inferior position. Wedgwood thought that the repercussion of the decision on India would be tragic and that it was the most disastrous step which had been taken since Lord North drove the American colonists out of the British Empire. He pledged the Labour party to do their best to reverse the decision. 'It is not easy, when a step like this has been taken, ever to put it right, but I am certain that the party I speak for tonight, when their turn

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1. ibid, p.18.
2. 167 H.C.Deb.,5s., cols.541-544, 25 July 1923.

comes will do their best. I cannot say more than that, because heaven knows what the repercussion of this will be before that time. But we will do our best to re-establish justice and fair play throughout the British Empire and put an end to what is ruining our real chance of peace and development.' In the meantime, Wedgwood advised the Indians to accept the settlement. Wedgwood made a firm commitment with the backing of MacDonald, that the Labour party would try to re-establish justice for the Indians if it achieved power.

The I.L.P. held stronger views about the Empire than the Labour party. Fenner Brockway wrote a pamphlet for the I.L.P. on 'How to End War'[1], giving the I.L.P. view on imperialism and internationalism. Capitalism had gained the Empire by means of treaties with ignorant chiefs. 'The native chief made a mark on a sheet of paper presented to him, and thereby proclaimed to the world that he had received a little cloth, some bottles of gin, and a promise of protection, in return for which he handed over the complete sovereignty of his land and peoples to the company concerned.'[2] Capitalist rivalries for Empire led to war. Socialists should boldly challenge the exploitation of the natural resources of subject peoples by capitalist groups and help the workers in the countries concerned to organise themselves to win their own economic freedom. The Socialist Commonwealth would be world-wide. It was only by international co-operation and international organisation of the workers that the production and distribution of the world's goods to meet the world's requirements could be carried out. Summing up, he stated

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1. A. Fenner Brockway, 'How to End War' (I.L.P., 1923)
2. ibid, p.5.

that the I.L.P. believed that modern wars were caused mainly by capitalism and imperialism and that Socialism was the best guarantee against war. The I.L.P. advocated the return to subject peoples of the natural resources which alien capitalists had grabbed and urged that all peoples should co-operate in the production and distribution of the world's goods, thus establishing an international Socialist Commonwealth. There should be total, univeral disarmament and arbitration to settle all disputes. The I.L.P. pressed the Labour party to make its colonial policy more radical.

The Labour party was soon given an opportunity to put its policies into action. In the General Election of 1923 the party gained 191 seats, the Liberals 159 and the Conservatives 258. The Liberals supported the Labour party's motion declaring lack of confidence in the Conservative Government on 17 January 1924 and the Labour party was then faced with the task of governing the British Empire. Although the party had not mentioned colonial affairs in its election manifesto 'Labour's Appeal to the Nation', the International Advisory Committee had worked out a policy for the Empire in Africa, Wedgwood had made declarations in the Commons concerning policy towards the Indians in Kenya and the party conference had passed anti-imperialist motions which had been supported by I.L.P. pamphlets. Whether the new minority government put any of these policies and pledges into effect depended largely on who was to be the Colonial Secretary. The Labour party did not change the method of making ministerial appointments and the task of choosing the government fell to the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. D. Marquand writes that in MacDonald's provisional list Henderson was the first choice

for Colonial Secretary.[1] This appears a slightly odd choice for Henderson had not shown much previous interest in the problems of the colonies. It indicates that MacDonald was not planning to give posts to those who knew most about the subject concerned. However, MacDonald seems to have changed his mind about Henderson considering him for the posts of Chairman of Ways and Means, the War Office, the Ministry of Health, and even thinking that Henderson should remain outside the government in charge of party organisation. Henderson finally became Home Secretary but a great deal of ill-feeling between him and MacDonald had been caused by then.[2]

On merit, the most likely candidates for the post of Colonial Secretary appeared to be Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, who had been the leading spokesman on colonial policy in the Commons or E.D. Morel, the founder of the U.D.C. and joint writer of the party's pamphlet 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's policy' who had been elected to Parliament in 1922. Another possibility was the Fabian, Sydney Olivier, who had been a civil servant at the Colonial Office and Governor of Jamaica. However, he was 65 in 1924, and, although he preferred the Colonial Office, was 'prepared as a veteran of the movement to be used up anywhere'.[3] He was given a peerage and became Secretary of State for India. Both Morel and Wedgwood were ex-Liberals but they had slightly different ideas on the best policy for Africa. Wedgwood wanted direct rule by the Colonial Office until the Africans were 'fit' for liberty, whereas Morel favoured indirect rule

1. D. Marquand, 'Ramsay MacDonald' (London, 1977) p.302.
2. ibid, pp.301-303.
3. quoted, D. Marquand, op.cit., p.300.

through the African chiefs. Wedgwood wanted to 'train the poor natives up to self-government, to teach them English, to start some political franchise, however limited, for Europeans, for Indians and for Africans on a common electoral roll.'[1]

C.V. Wedgwood writes in her autobiography of her uncle, Josiah Wedgwood, that 'it would be absurd to deny that he had cherished, until the early 1920s, a not unreasonable hope that he might set his mark on history, and especially on the development of the Empire as a progressive statesman at the Colonial or Dominions Office.'[2] Dalton confirms that Wedgwood wanted the Colonial Office; as they were travelling back by 'bus from the Webbs', Wedgwood told Dalton that he hoped for the Colonial Office.[3] Sidney Webb thought that Wedgwood was a 'difficulty' in the last few days of forming the Cabinet. Wedgwood insisted in being included and 'fought hard to be Secretary of State for India or the Colonies.'[4] However, Wedgwood was passed over for both these offices and given the dull post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The reason seems to be that he and MacDonald disliked each other intensely. Wedgwood thought that MacDonald was jealous of his ability in Parliament and regarded him as a rival for the leadership. He had written articles in 'Reynolds News' mocking MacDonald for spending his time with Duchesses and titled ladies.[5] Malcolm MacDonald thinks that Wedgwood was 'more left wing' than his father and this was the cause of their disagreement.[6]

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1. J.C. Wedgwood, 'My Fighting Life' (London, 1941)p.185.
2. C.V. Wedgwood, 'The Last of the Radicals' (London,1951) p.158.
3. H. Dalton, 'Call Back Yesterday' (London,1953) p.144.
4. S. Webb, 'Labour Government of 1924(, Political Quarterly, vol.32, No.1 (Jan-March 1961),p.15.
5. C.V. Wedgwood, op.cit.,p.152
6. Interview with M. MacDonald 21 August 1973

MacDonald may have been worried that Wedgwood would have caused too much trouble with the white settlers in Kenya, if he had been Colonial Secretary. It is impossible to say exactly why Wedgwood was not chosen. It seems that he and MacDonald were not on good terms and that MacDonald may have felt that Wedgwood would have caused too much of a stir at the Colonial Office. Wedgwood was very disappointed when he was not chosen for the Colonies or India. According to Webb, whose opinion is not completely objective, Wedgwood became 'a sullen and discontented colleague, who contributed next to nothing in the way of service either in the House or out of it, and was the cause of trouble, occasionally, in the Cabinet itself by his persistence in carping at Oliver's policy about India.'[1]

E.D. Morel was less forceful than Wedgwood and of less importance in the Labour party. He found himself left out altogether. Morel's first choice was probably the Foreign Office. However, his hopes were unfulfilled, Arthur Ponsonby wrote to him in December 1923 to tell him that MacDonald had chosen Thomas to be Foreign Secretary. Ponsonby was dismayed for he thought that Morel had everything that was wanted, knowledge, a full grasp of the facts, personality, manner.[2] However, the proposal that Thomas would be Foreign Secretary leaked out to the 'Manchester Guardian' and was killed by scorn,[3] and the protests of the I.L.P.[4] Thomas was offered the Colonial Office instead and, after initial doubts about the prestige of the office, accepted when he found that it outranked the service ministries in order of precedence. Beatrice Webb wrote

1. S. Webb, op.cit., p.15
2. Ponsonby to Morel, December 1923, E.D. Morel Papers.
3. C.L. Mowat, 'Britain Between the Wars' (London, 1955) p.172.
4. D. Marquand, op.cit., pp.299-300.

in her diary that Henderson reported to Sidney at a dinner at Haldane's that Thomas was to be 'Colonies and he is quite pleased with himself.'[1] Webb states that MacDonald suggested to Thomas that Morel should be an Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office but 'Thomas flatly refused to have him' because of 'his extreme views on Africa', which shows the priority the Labour leaders attached to their African policy. Morel was 'bitterly disappointed at getting no place',[2] and he wrote to Lord Parmoor, who was responsible for Foreign Affairs in the House of Lords, proposing that he, Morel, should be made a special Under-Secretary for the League of Nations.[3] However, this proposal was not followed up. MacDonald wrote to Morel to express his 'deep regret that though I have tried hard to get you into something as an Under-Secretary', he had 'completely failed'. He was not in complete control of the matter but had to count heads. He would try to get Morel in if an opportunity arose.[4] Snowden wrote to Morel that they preferred not to muzzle him with office; he could continue to be a critic outside and keep the government up to the mark.[5] Dorothy Ponsonby thought that 'Thomas is made Colonial Secretary because he has to be rewarded with one of the best offices but everyone admits that E.D. Morel would be much better at the job. But simply because he represents no special section of the Labour party and is not forceful he is left out.'[6] MacDonald was unable to place the colleague with whom he

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1. B. Webb, 'Diaries, 1919-24', ed. M.Cole (London,1952)p.262.
2. S. Webb, op.cit., p.17
3. E.D. Morel to Lord Parmoor, 2 Feb.1924, E.D. Morel Papers.
4. MacDonald to E.D. Morel, 1924, E.D. Morel Papers.
5. P. Snowden to E.D. Morel, 4 February, 1924, E.D. Morel Papers.
6. D. Ponsonby to E.D. Morel, 28 January 1924, E.D. Morel Papers.

had worked over the agitation for Congo Reform and on the U.D.C. Executive Committee during the war. Morel had to be content with a letter to the Nobel Committee recommending him for the Peace prize by the Cabinet and members of the Labour party.[1] A factor, which was common to both Wedgwood and Morel, was that they were both committed to the Labour party's policy, which had been worked out by the Advisory Committee. Morel and Woolf were responsible for drawing up the policy, Wedgwood had outlined it in the House of Commons. It appears that a decision was made not to appoint someone as Colonial Secretary who was likely to make a determined attempt to implement the policy and confront the settler lobby. It seems that MacDonald was determined to preserve continuity and consensus at the Colonial Office.[2]

When the appointments were announced, the 'New Leader' wrote that MacDonald evidently expected versatility in his ministers. People were given offices about which they knew nothing. Olivier went to the India Office, rather than the Colonies, about which he knew something. Thomas went to the Colonial Office, about which he knew nothing, rather than a domestic office, which he might have known something about. However, this did not seem to worry the paper. It felt the Labour ministers 'experience of life' would make up for their lack of experience in office. 'Even in the field of foreign and colonial affairs they need not fear comparison.[3] Sidney Webb thought that the Cabinet erred on the side of respectability with too many peers and outsiders; if he had been composing the Cabinet, it

1. 'The Times', 31 January 1924.
2. E.A. Brett, 'Colonialism and Unverdevelopment in East Africa' (London, 1973) p.62. As D. Marquand writes the evidence concerning MacDonald's choice of ministers is 'tantalizingly incomplete'. D. Marquand, op.cit., p.299.
3. 'New Leader', 25 January 1924, p.2.

would have been more working class and more to the 'left' of the Labour party.[1] However, a 'working class' minister was not necessarily going to pursue very 'leftwing' policies.

On arriving at the Colonial Office Thomas is supposed to have announced that he had come 'to see that there was no mucking about with the British Empire.'[2] His civil servants appeared to like him. Dalton writes that a Private Secretary, inherited from his predecessor, when asked how he liked his new chief replied: "Very much indeed. It's much more intimate. My old chief used to ring the bell for me. My new chief puts his head round the door of my room, and says, 'Come 'ere you b------!"[3] Apart from the language, Thomas did not seem intent on changing very much at the Colonial Office. His main aim seemed to be to show that a working class man who had begun life as an engine cleaner could look after the British Empire as well as any Lord.

Conservatives had made political capital out of the fact that under a Labour Government the Empire would collapse in ruins. Jack Jones, a Labour M.P. interested in colonial questions, wrote that 'one thing has impressed me more than another in the objections of our opponents to a possible Labour Government, and that is their almost unanimous opinion that under Labour the Empire is bound to come to a sticky end.'[4] Thomas ensured that this did not happen; on leaving office he won praise from the 'Daily Express' and 'The Times'. However, he did not win the approval of the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions which was set up in February 1924 when the Labour Government was formed. Thomas ignored

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1. B. Webb, 'Diaries, 1912-24',ed. M.I.Cole(London,1952)p.263.
2. R. Lyman, 'The First Labour Government' (London,1957)p.106.
3. H. Dalton, 'Call Back Yesterday', (London,1953)p.147.
4. J. Jones, 'My Lively Life' p.181.

most of its memoranda and did not make much attempt to put the party's policy into effect. The policy had been published in the pamphlet 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy' and Thomas had himself expounded it in his book ironically entitled 'When Labour Rules'.[1]

George Lansbury gave Thomas some advice in an article in the 'Daily Herald'.[2] He stated that the government had inherited many problems from its predecessors and none was more difficult or more menacing to the British Empire than the question of India. He went on to discuss the problem of the Indians in Kenya where the Indians were treated as outsiders and placed in subjection to the white settlers. The lands in the Eastern hemisphere were being annexed by white men and the original inhabitants were driven to live in compounds and reserves which were situated on the most barren and inhospitable portions of the land. This process could not bring peace and concord to the world. Lansbury ended with a quotation from the Bible 'For God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation.' Lansbury was an example of the Christian element in the Labour party which viewed the black man as the brother of the white man. He continued to say that 'the Labour Movement had always declared itself in favour of a British Commonwealth composed of sister nations, bound together in the bonds of fraternity and comradeship. We have declared again and again our abhorrence of the Imperialist doctrine of

1. Mower states, op.cit., that the reason a positive policy was not pursued by Thomas was that the party had not worked one out. But the policy had existed since 1920 and Thomas had outlined it himself in his book.
2. 'Daily Herald', 2 February 1924, p.4.

domination, and our faith in the principle of self-determination'.

Jimmy Thomas was more concerned to quieten the fears of the establishment that Labour would try to put into effect the doctrine of self-determination. The Prince of Wales was the chief guest when Thomas made his first speech as Colonial Secretary. Thomas declared that those people who were apprehensive about the advent of the Labour Government should follow the example of the Prince of Wales and 'his illustrious and distinguished father. They were the least disturbed of people....because they were the most wise...they knew their people better than the others, because they long recognised that patriotism, love of Empire, service and duty were not the gift or monopoly of a class or creed.' Thomas accepted 'the seals of office with pride and gratitude - pride because I can look back to the day when I was a little errand boy nine years of age, gratitude to the constitution that enables the engine cleaner of yesterday to be the Minister of today. That constitution, so broad, so wide, so democratic must be preserved, and the Empire which provides it must be maintained.'[1] The 'Daily Express' was well pleased with the new Colonial Secretary: in a leader on 5 February 1924 it declared that in his recent speeches, Thomas had 'paid eloquent tribute to the monarchy, reaffirmed his position as a constitutionalist, and revealed himself as a banner bearer of Empire.' These speeches had done 'perhaps more than anything else to establish confidence both in the Government of which he is a member and in the great imperial work with which he, as Secretary of State for the Colonies,

1. 'Financial Times', 29 January, 1924.

is charged'.[1] On his accession to Office, Thomas had received a letter from Lord Beaverbrook: "My heartiest congratulations on your accession to the Colonial Office. I naturally feel the greatest interest in this appointment belonging as I do to one of your subject races of the Empire and in fact I now consider that I owe you allegiance as my feudal chief. I always hoped that the biggest office in the stall would fall to you. Next to the Premiership I would wish for your control of the Colonial Office."[2]

Thomas wanted to maintain continuity of policy at the Colonial Office. He put the emphasis on the policy that the Duke of Devonshire had outlined in his White Paper. Thomas wrote a memo stating that he did not want the working classes to think of the colonial countries mainly as markets to which they could sell anything they made from motors to matchboxes and also as areas from which they could get everything they needed from corn to gold. He wanted the working classes of Great Britain to think of these countries as belonging not to themselves but to the 70 million people who live in them. 'Just as Great Britain has got to be ruled for the sake of the British and Australia for the sake of the Australian, so Kenya and the Gold Coast have got to be ruled for the sake of the people who live there. How to give them a life better worth living is the one question to which all others must be brought to the test.'[3] It was easy to state these aims but much more difficult to put them into practice.

The new Colonial Secretary made his first statement in the House of Commons on 25 February 1924.[4] In this he

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1. 'Daily Express', 5 February, 1924.
2. Beaverbrook to Thomas, 23 January 1924, Thomas Papers, U1625, C25.
3. Thomas Papers, U1625, C18.
4. 170 H.C.Deb., 5s.,col.195ff., 25 February 1924.

stated that the question of Kenya was one of the first problems which he had to deal with. It was the policy of the Labour Government that the first obligation in Kenya was its trust for the 'natives'. This involved more than talking about the franchise and immigration questions; the problem was to ensure that the 'native' was fairly protected and, above all, educated. 'In other words, I believe that, instead of following past practice, I would quite frankly like to develop the ground of making him a peasant.' Thomas did not elaborate on this idea, which had been put forward before by Morel and Wedgwood, but continued to ask for a vote on a scheme prepared by his predecessor for the development of cotton-growing and the building of railways in Kenya. 'As Lancashire is dependent upon cotton and as we can grow the cotton within our Empire, it is to our obvious advantage to do what we can in this way.' The railway development would mean immediate orders at home and so would help to cure the unemployment problem as well as facilitating cotton-growing in Kenya. The main reason for these developments was to benefit the home country. Thomas did not go into detail concerning the question of the Indians in Kenya merely stating that 'without going into the merits of Europeans or Indians... our first obligation in Kenya is our trust for the natives.' Thomas was pursuing the policy of the 1923 White Paper. He did not say anything about Wedgwood's pledge to see if the policies of the Devonshire White Paper concerning the Indians could be changed in the direction of granting a common franchise for all races.

E.D. Morel was sceptical about the scheme for building railways. He did not think the branch lines proposed would

tap the cotton-growing areas and he thought very great caution was needed in examining railway schemes in Kenya in view of the scandals of the former railway development. He hoped that the railways would not be used to serve the 'interests of the white population as against the interests of the native population' as they had often done in the past.[1]

The discussion was continued in the Commons on 3 March 1924 when L.S. Amery moved a reduction in the vote 'for form's sake in order to keep the debate on Kenya.' He was actually glad to think that Thomas was going to continue the policy initiated by the previous Government and that he aimed at seeing it effectually carried out.[2] However, Thomas was 'astounded' at the reduction in the vote, when he had made his general statement on policy a few days previously there had not been a hostile word of criticism. The trend of the debate had demonstrated that the question was a non-party one. He had 'no hesitation in saying that the main work of the Colonial Office could be treated in the same spirit. We have differences of opinion and there are cleavages on certain matters but the general sense of the parties is that Dominion questions and Empire problems should be kept out of the arena of party politics.' Thomas was determined to try to preserve all-party unity on colonial questions. He went on to announce that in order to see that justice was done to the 'native' and to ensure his general protection, training and education, he was favourably disposed to the appointment of a small committee to enquire into the application of the principle of trusteeship on behalf of the 'natives'.[3]

1. 170 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 193-195, 25 February 1924.
2. 170 H.C.Deb.,5s.,col. 1081, 3 March 1924.
3. 170 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 1081-1083, 3 March 1924.

E.D. Morel continued his discussion in this debate.[1] He expressed 'satisfaction' at the idea of instituting a Committee of Investigation into the whole question. The questions of the railways and cotton could not be dealt with without going into the question of British 'native policy' in Kenya. The only way to get the cotton was to treat the 'native' decently. The policy that had been pursued in the last 20 years in Kenya had been entirely different from that pursued in Uganda and Nigeria and was leading to the destruction of the 'native' population. If the present policy continued the 'native' population would continually dwindle and the Government would be left 'whistling' for its cotton. The inquiry should deal with the whole of 'native policy' for the previous 20 years. 'There is no doubt that between the taxation imposed, the whittling away of the native "reserves", the Masters' andServants' Ordinance and the Labourers' Ordinance, you have a condition of affairs in Kenya which approximates to forced labour of a very bad kind.' Keny had become the centre where two entirely different schools of thought were contending in regard to the development of Britain's imperial policy in Africa. In order to follow the policy laid down in the 1923 White Paper of ensuring that the 'natives' interests' were paramount there would have to be a fundamental change of process and policy in Kenya. The 'natives' would have to have real security of tenure, at the moment they did not know from one day to the next whether they would be shifted from their reserves to another part of the country. Britain would not get supplies of cotton unless there was a happy, contented 'native' population producing in their own right and for

1. 170 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 1090-1092, 3 March 1924.

their own profit. The policy pursued in Kenya should be the policy that had been so successfully followed in Uganda and Nigeria.

Colonel Wedgwood tried to do something to make Thomas honour the pledge about the Indians in Kenya, which he had made on behalf of the Labour party. On 3 March 1924, he wrote to Sir Ronald Waterhouse of the Cabinet Office suggesting that the issue should be brought before the Cabinet. "In view of the situation in Kenya today, the refusal of Indians to co-operate in the constitution, their refusal to pay poll tax, and their imprisonment, I think that this question of the pledge I gave and the White Paper should be brought before the Cabinet in order that we may come to some conclusion. Mr. Thomas has already made a declaration on the question which was taken as the view of H.M.G. and has created the impression that the declaration of 25 July has been, or can be, repudiated. The declaration, I need hardly say, was made on the express direction of Mr. MacDonald."[1]

The subject was discussed by the Cabinet on 12 March 1924. Thomas wrote a memo for the Cabinet on 11 March 1924 setting out his opinion on the situation.[2] His civil servants had advised him to preserve his freedom until he had received the Indian Committee and also to wait until he had received further information on the question of immigration from the Governor.[3] Thomas wrote in his memo that shortly after taking office, he had, as advised, mentioned publicly that he proposed to be guided by the Devonshire White Paper which had discussed the various points which

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1. Colonel Wedgwood to Sir Ronald Waterhouse, 3 March 1924, C.O. 533, file 12262 (CO/533/319)
2. C.P.171(24)
3. C.O. 533 file 12262,p330, (CO/533/319)

were at issue between the Europeans and the Indian community. On the question of 'land in the highlands' it had decided in favour of the Europeans and on the question of 'segregation in the townships' had found in favour of the Indians; a compromise had been laid down on the franchise question and on the question of immigration a general principle of controlling immigration (irrespective of race) in the economic interests of the 'natives' had been recognised. The Franchise Bill for the election of two Indian members to the Legislative Council on a special franchise had been passed but the Indians had not taken advantage of it by registering as voters. They had decided on a policy of non-co-operation and had refused to pay taxes. Some had been sent to prison. Thomas expected to see the Committee from India early in the next month to discuss matters affecting Indians in the colonies.

The questions that Thomas put to the Cabinet were: Was Colonel Wedgwood's statement a formal pledge on behalf of the Labour party? Did it bind a Labour Government which did not have a formal majority in the House of Commons? Did it bind the Labour party to take action without consulting the Governor? Was it not rather a general pledge to establish justice and fair play? Did the non-co-operation of the Indians make the fulfilment of the pledge more immediate?

Thomas continued to point out that in the case of India itself the Prime Minister and Lord Olivier had deprecated giving in to the demands of Indians who pursued a policy of non-co-operation. He quoted a letter from Lord Olivier to the Secretary of the Indian Overseas Association, in which Lord Olivier had stated that

'constitutional changes have been accepted, it is quite impossible and entirely contrary to the whole methods and traditions of British constitutional development towards free and equal institutions immediately to reverse and upset arrangements which have been made, not for the purpose of establishing an ideal form of democratic constitution, but for the essential purpose of Government, namely of carrying on the business of Government in the interests of the greatest happiness and greatest possible freedom of the greatest number.' Thomas was convinced that 'the only possible attitude' was that he should be guided by the White Paper decisions 'as at present advised.' However, he would wait until he had heard from the Committee from India and taken up the matter with the Governor. On the question of immigration he would wait to see whether the figures which the Governor was going to send him indicated that control was needed. In the meantime, he was looking into the question of how far the economic interest of the 'natives' required that immigration should be controlled. If he found that control was necessary he would exercise it, and if not, he would hold the power in reserve. He thought that the franchise should be given a chance; the fact that the Indians did not accept it did not mean that it was proving impossible. It was clear that Thomas was following the advice of his civil servants rather than trying to implement a more positive policy.

After considering Thomas's memo the Cabinet agreed: "To approve the general proposals of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, namely, that for the moment, pending the arrival of the Committee to be sent from India, his only possible attitude was, as announced in Parliament, to be

guided by the decisions published in the White Paper".[1]

The Governor of Kenya, Sir Robert Coryndon, wrote to J.H. Thomas on 27 March 1924.[2] He reported that the Europeans were loyally carrying out their share of the White Paper decisions and were confident that the Government would carry them out in full. The Elected members of the Council had voted for the Franchise Bill in January without opposition. The Indians, who were determined to fight the White Paper, were on the whole quiet and not unfriendly; they were awaiting the outcome of the Conference in London with the Committee from India. The European community was also awaiting the outcome of that conference with trepidation.

On the question of immigration, the Governor stated that the aim of the draft bill prepared by his government was to apply the principle of an 'economic quota' of immigrants of any race to restrict immigration where it was likely to be detrimental to the interests of the 'natives' of the colony. The whole intention was to safeguard the interest of the Africans. Sir Richard Coryndon did not see how the principle of the 'economic quota' could be knocked down. He firmly believed that concessions on the Kenya question would not turn Indian hostility into a wiser or easier direction. 'It is my duty to tell you quite plainly that if the principles of the draft bill are modified or weakened to a degree that is even likely to upset the clear intention of the White Paper and the definite pledges that belong thereto, there will follow grave disturbances and it is possible that such disturbances will not be confined to the colony.'

The letter went on to point out that since March 1923

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1. Cabinet Conclusion, 12 March 1924, 19(24)6.
2. Sir R. Coryndon to J.H. Thomas, 27 March 1924, Thomas Papers, U1625,019/3.

the colonists had established close touch with many influential people in South Africa and believed they had a friend in Smuts. They also had many influential friends in England. If the immigration point was abandoned the fire that would follow would be as 'hot as it would have been a year ago.' The colonists would put up the most determined fight, for they were absolutely unanimous behind the White Paper. The Governor concluded by asking the Colonial Secretary to visit the colony. 'This colony stands quite by itself in many ways and no one in England can understand how fine it is, or the spirit of its people without seeing it for himself.' The Governor was threatening a 'white backlash' if anything was done to improve the position of the Indians. Thomas replied on 2 May 1924,[1] stating that he was only too well aware of the 'dangers and difficulties' connected with the Indian question. The previous Conservative Government had made the undertaking to consult the Indian Committee and to submit the draft immigration bill to the India Office and the Indian Government before any decisions were taken with regard to it, which was what he was going to do. If any modifications were to be made he would not fail to consult the Governor before any steps were taken. Thomas said that he would like to visit Kenya but there was little prospect of finding the time. Thomas did not suggest to the Governor that the Labour Party meant to pursue a stronger policy to emphasise African rights than had been pursued by the Conservatives.

Thomas wrote again to the Governor on 22 May 1924,[2]

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1. J.H.Thomas to Sir R. Coryndon, 2 May 1924, Thomas Papers, U1625/019/3.
2. J.H. Thomas to Sir R. Coryndon, 22 May 1924, C.O.533 file 24608, (CO/533/319)

saying that he was most anxious to protect the interests of Kenya and the economic position of the 'natives'. Considering his possible attitude, he declared that he adhered to the view held by the Secretary of State at the time of the Wood-Winterton proposals that the power of control was essential, and the tendency of increased immigration as shown by the latest figures indicated that it might be necessary to use that power soon. The proposals put forward by the Governor provided the machinery not only for control but also to investigate how far immigration was necessary for various purposes. An Immigration Ordinance should be passed so that the latter machinery could be set up to secure the power to introduce actual control of immigration when Thomas was satisfied that it was needed.

Another point of view was expressed by the Labour party's Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions which was also considering the position of the Indians in Kenya. The first memo of the newly constituted Advisory Committee was a statement on the economic position of the Indians in Kenya by Leonard Woolf.[1] In this, Woolf stated that the white settlers of Kenya were maintaining that the immigration of the Indians into Kenya should be stopped because the Indians were competing with or in some way retarding the economic development of the 'natives'. This view had been taken by the White Paper of 1923.[2] Woolf thought that there was no evidence to show that the Indians competed economically with the 'natives' or retarded their development. The most valuable economic commodity in Kenya was land, which the Indian was debarred from owning where it was most valuable. Woolf believed that there was prima facie evidence that it was the Europeans who were competing

1. A.C.I.Q., memo No. 1, 1924 February.
2. 'Indians in Kenya', Cmd. 1922, p.18.

with and retarding the economic development of the 'natives' by expropriating them from the land, by exploiting their labour, and by monopolising the revenue for their own interests so that nothing was available for promoting 'native' interests or for the education of the 'natives'. The real economic competition was between the Indians and the white settlers who were demanding that Indian immigration should be stopped. The Europeans feared the competition of the Indians for land, particularly in the Highlands. The demand for control on immigration and the demand for excluding the Indians from the Highlands both stemmed from white fear of economic competition from the Indians. The policy of the Government should be that defined in the White Paper as the 'protection and advancement of the natives races'but there should be no racial discrimination in the Government's policy of protecting the 'native'. An impartial inquiry should be held into the economic effect upon the 'natives' of immigration in general which should include theeffect of the European immigrants on the 'native' economic activities as well as those of the Indian immigrants.

E.D. Morel also wrote a memo on Kenya for the A.C.I.Q. which discussed the 'fundamental necessities of policy in Kenya as elsewhere in the African Tropics'.[1] It stated that the most urgent and immediate needs were the passing of an Order in Council forbidding the further alienation of land, pending the result of an inquiry. A Commission should be appointed to survey and demarcate on the spot the existing 'native' reserves. Another Committee should be appointed with the task of setting out the nature, character, and extent of the land alienated to the Europeans. It should

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 2, April 1924.

also examine the incidence of direct and indirect taxation on the 'natives' and the effect upon 'native' social and economic life of the Registration of Labourers' Act and the Masters' and Servants' Ordinance. Statistics should be collected for the past 20 years and all available evidence presented as to the best methods of encouraging the 'native' population in the cultivation of specific products of economic value for export - especially cotton.

Both these experts called for Committees of investigation. E.D. Morel welcomed Thomas's announcement in the House of Commons in March that he was in favour of a small committee of inquiry into the application of the principle of trusteeship. However, the white settlers in Kenya did not welcome the announcement. In a leading article on 8 March 1924 the 'East African Standard'[1] declared that so much had been heard of the 'trusteeship of the natives' that there was a real danger that inexperienced theorists would lead the British Government so far astray that Kenya would be saddled with an impossible policy which endeavoured to ignore the permanent fact of European settlement. 'The members of the British Government were the Trustees of the Native races in theory only: the real executive is the administration and white community in Kenya.' They knew from practical experience and daily contact what the definition of 'Native Trusteeship' was - it was the development of the African so that he could become a useful citizen in his own country and a loyal and industrious asset to the British Empire. Kenya did not deal in theory and any policy that was founded on theory alone would fail when it came up against practical realities. There was little

1. 'East African Standard', 8 March 1924.

reason to expect that anything useful would come of a small committee conducting a 'hole and corner' inquiry in the Colonial Office. It would merely prove a magnet to attract all the cranks and unsound critics of Kenya who were engaged in pulling the wool over Mr. Thomas's eyes by persuading him that he has a duty to the African that even his most distinguished predecessor failed to recognise and carry out. Unless the committee came to Kenya and became literally 'soaked' in the atmosphere which surrounds the problem the report would be of no practical value to Kenya or the tribes which inhabit it. The white settlers were of the opinion that only they knew how 'trusteeship' should be implemented. They thought that the 'men on the spot' were best able to deal with the question.

On 4 April Thomas received a deputation at the Colonial Office led by C.R. Buxton and composed of members of all political parties, including Conservative M.P.s such as Ormsby-Gore and Sidney Henn, on the question of the economic development of the East African territories.[1] (Missionary societies and commercial bodies were also represented on the delegation.) The deputation explained that they recognised the necessity of developing cotton production and industry in general within the East African colonies from Uganda to Southern Rhodesia, but they desired to safeguard the principle of the trusteeship of the 'natives'. The Conservatives were more in favour of ensuring industrial and railway development, whereas the Labour and Liberal members were more in favour of safeguarding the Africans' interests. C.R. Buxton said: "The real reason why we are here today, is that there is a general feeling amongst us who are speaking for the East African Colonies that there

1. 'Westminster Gazette', 5 April 1924.

should be a great development in the cotton growing industry there - that is the main idea at the present moment - in order to assist with raw materials one of our greatest industries, and the mere fact of it being very largely developed does raise the very difficult question of the natives in these Crown Colonies."[1] Buxton thought that a special committee should be appointed which would enquire into the matter in order to see that the interests of the Africans were protected when the development took place.

J.H. Thomas said in reply to the delegation that he was strongly impressed by its representative nature and would welcome their co-operation in the solution of what was a large and important matter. He would give a fuller reply in the House of Commons after he had given fuller consideration to what had been said. The occasion of Thomas' statement was a debate in the House of Commons on 8 April 1924. A motion was put down by Sir Sydney Henn urging the Colonial Secretary to send out a special commission to East Africa 'to report to him on the practicality of co-ordinating policy and services throughout the territories, and to advise on the programme of future economic development, especially cotton-growing and railway construction.'[2] Ormsby-Gore, the former Conservative Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, seconded the motion. Sir Robert Hamilton proposed an amendment to instruct the commission to consider the desirability of creating a separate administrative area for the Highlands of Kenya, which he thought would enable

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1. C.O. 533 file 17103 p.439, (CO/533/319)
2. 172 H.C.Deb.,cols. 351ff., 8 April 1924.

the 8,000 whites in the Highlands to form a separate colony and this would remove the danger of a small white community exercising a dominant influence over the 10,000,000 blacks surrounding them.[1]

Replying to the debate,[2] J.H. Thomas said that he had been impressed by the calm atmosphere of the debate. Parties had been forgotten and the House was approaching the matter free from any party prejudice, free from party considerations and with the single desire to see that justice was done to those whom they were entrusted with the responsibility of looking after. They were dealing with 35,000,000 people in East and West Africa and an area of 1,635,000 square miles. The first and paramount consideration was to give effect, not only to the White Paper, but to the principles underlying the White Paper. The motion asked for a commission of investigation and he had also had representations made to him to appoint a committee to examine every aspect of the situation and advise the Minister responsible. He had come to the conclusion that a committee should be appointed but it should not be a mass meeting and it should not be composed of a group of people with 'fads'. (By this Thomas probably meant that he did not want the committee to be full of pro-African humanitarians.) 'It is to be a real committee, not only with knowledge of the subject, non-party in character, representative of this House and all sections outside, but whose function is limited to giving advice to the Minister who alone must be responsible.' He was also disposed to recommend the appointment of a Commission, as the motion

1. 172 H.C.Deb.,cols. 373-375, 8 April 1924
2. 172 H.C.Deb.,5s., cols.380-384, 8 April 1924.

requested, to investigate on the spot, subject to the concurrence of the Treasury. Although Thomas thought that East Africa should be developed along the lines on which West Africa was already developing, it was positively dangerous to send people and convey the impression that they were going there because of maladministration. He had nothing but admiration for those who were administering East and West Africa because they were doing a difficult job well. He had come to the decision very quickly that one could not sit in Downing Street and give instructions on every point. Although he had written about governing the colonies, he did not tell his 'very efficient' staff to turn to his chapter in 'When Labour Rules' about the Colonies when presented with a problem. It was far more difficult than that. The Colonial Secretary could see a thousand reasons against the suggestion of Sir Robert Hamilton for a separate white administration of the Highlands of Kenya but none in favour of it. The motion was accepted on behalf of the Government. Thomas was, in effect, saying that he was not going to carry out the Labour party's policy but was relying on the advice of his civil servants. The way he announced his decision to set up a committee suggested that the membership would not be radical.

J.H. Harris, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society and a Liberal M.P., welcomed the Colonial Secretary's announcement that he was going to send out a Commission.[1] He wanted to discuss the terms of reference which the Colonial Secretary had not expanded upon. The countries that they were

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1. 172 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 387-390, 8 April 1924.

considering were at least six times the size of France and were occupied by 12,000,000 to 15,000,000 people in all stages of advancement towards civilisation. One of the outstanding factors of the countries was their lack of uniformity. There were various systems of land tenure, taxation, administration of justice as well as many different interpretations of the educational needs of the people. Harris hoped that the terms of reference would include all these subjects on which there was variation so that they could arrive at some uniformity of treatment.

The Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions also produced some advice on the terms of reference. In May, it produced a memo containing a resolution on East Africa[2] which was sent to the Colonial Office. This stated that in view of the Colonial Secretary's decision to appoint a Committee to enquire into the questions of cotton growing and 'native' policy in East Africa, the A.C.I.Q. believed that the interests of the 'natives' should be paramount in the considerations of the Committee and that the number appointed who definitely represented the interests of the African inhabitants should be at least equal to the number appointed who represented the imperial interests of cotton growing and European economic interests. The Committee should inquire into the best methods of assisting the 'natives' to become producers of cotton and the other agricultural products required by European industry. This would include education, experimental stations and expert advice. The position of the 'native' in regard to land should also be studied and the methods required for assuring to the 'native' full and adequate rights in land sufficient

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1. A.C.I.Q., Memo No. 3, May 1924.

for his maintenance as an independent producer. The third major point of inquiry should be the effect of the system of taxation upon the position of the 'native' as a prospective producer of cotton and other industrial products.

The terms of reference of the East Africa Committee were announced on 23 June 1924 in answer to a written question by Sir W. de Frede.[1] Thomas stated that he was appointing a Committee to inquire into and report on various matters concerned with East Africa, and also a small Commission, drawn from the members of the Committee, which would visit East Africa in order to inquire into certain questions locally. He also announced that he would be soon setting up a separate Committee to inquire into land questions in East and West Africa.[2] Apart from the land Committee, he did not propose to take any action on West Africa. The Committee on East Africa would deal with land questions only in so far as they were connected with other questions with which it was dealing. 'Native' education would also be excluded from this Committee in view of the fact that Thomas' predecessor had set up a 'Standing Committee on Native Education'. The amalgamation or federation of the East African territories would also be excluded from consideration by the East African Committee. Its terms of reference would be to consider and report on the measures to be taken to accelerate the general economic development of the British East African Dependencies and the means of securing closer co-ordination of policy on such important matters as transportation, cotton-growing, and the control of human, animal and plant diseases, the steps necessary to ameliorate

1. 175 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 70-71, 23 June 1924.
2. Lord Lugard had suggested this to Thomas on 4 April 1924, (CO.533/320/34378)

the social condition of the 'natives' of East Africa, including improvement of health and economic development, the economic relations of 'natives' and 'non-natives' with special reference to labour contracts, care of labourers, certification of identification, employment of women and children, the taxation of 'natives' and the provision of services directed to their moral and material improvement. The Committee would be representative of all parties and interests and would be chaired by Lord Southborough. Of the nineteen members only six were supporters of the rights of Africans, E.D. Morel, J.H. Harris, C.R. Buxton, J.H. Oldham, H. Snell and A. Balfour. Thomas ignored the A.C.I.Q.'s suggestion that at least half the members of the committee should be sympathetic to the Africans.

The members of the Parliamentary Commission to visit East Africa were unlikely to write a report which put African interests uppermost. It consisted of W. Ormsby-Gore as Chairman, A.G. Church, the Labour member and F.C. Linfield, the Liberal member. J. Calder was the secretary. Its terms of reference were to visit Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Uganda and Kenya and obtain as much information as possible on the subjects considered by the East African Committee.[1] It was to exert 'a decisive influence on moderate British opinion in the settlers' favour'.[2] The most radical members turned out to be Linfield, the Liberal, and, Calder, the secretary, who was removed from the Colonial Office on his return for his 'unsympathetic manner' towards the settlers.[3] Jack Jones protested that Church was not a very suitable choice for

1. 176 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols.1736-1737, 28 July 1924.
2. E.A. Brett, op.cit., p.181.
3. ibid.

the Labour representative. Major Church was the secretary of the National Union of Scientific Workers. He had shown no previous interest in the problems of the Africans. It appears that Thomas chose him rather than a member of the pro-African group because he did not wish to cause trouble with the settlers. He wanted to maintain continuity with Conservative policy. From this point of view the visit was a success, Church, Ormsby-Gore and the settlers became very friendly.

The committee that the A.C.I.Q. placed the most hope in was the Land Committee.[1] C.R. Buxton, the chairman of the A.C.I.Q.,wrote to Lord Arnold, the Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, that he was 'extremely glad to note the announcement of a Land Committee'...When I mentioned this to you first, I thought it was a utopian idea....I believe it may lead to one of the biggest achievements of the Labour Government.'[2]

Woolf had sent Lord Arnold a rough draft of terms of reference for the Committee. These were to enquire into and report upon the systems of land tenure and of Government policy with regard to ownership, leasing and disposal of land in the British Crown Colonies, Protectorates and Mandated Territories in Africa and of their effect upon the economic life, well-being, progress and education of the natives, in particular with respect to the following: (1) what legal rights, if any,have native communities and individual natives in land? (2) Is there sufficient for the

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1. The membership was Lord Islington, J.S. Wardlaw-Milne, A. Wigglesworth, E. Fletcher, Sir W. Napier, E.D. Morel, L. Woolf and C. Strachey.
2. C.R. Buxton to Lord Arnold, 30 June 1924, C.O.533 file 34378, (C.O./533/320)

support of every native family? (3) What has been the policy of administrations with regard to 'native reserves'? (4) What has been the policy with regard to the alienation, leasing and concession of land to the Europeans? (5) What steps have been taken to make the most economic use of the land? (6) What has been the policy with regard to mineral and mining rights?[1]

Arnold wrote back to Woolf thanking him and stating that his terms of reference would be 'extremely useful'.[2] E.D. Morel also wrote to the Colonial Office concerning the Land Committee. Writing to J.H. Thomas,[3] he thought that 'the fact of having two committees ought to turn out to be the best possible course. You, of course, realise as well as I do, that all the other questions - economic production, development of resources, success of cotton-growing, success of railways, increase in trade and customs revenue, depend upon placing native rights in land upon an unassailable foundation. On such a foundation you can then build up a vigorous, increasing native population which, through technical instruction (primarily), technical assistance, sympathetic advice and so on, will become a valuable asset to the major national interest. But it is especially clear that if you want this in Kenya you will have to fight for it, and face a vested interest which is implacably determined to make the Kenya native a serf - which is to destroy him. And you will have to be prepared to see the men on your Committee who are known to be opposed to this

1. L.S. Woolf to Lord Arnold, 31 May 1924, C.O.533 file 34378, (C.O./533/32)
2. Arnold to Woolf, 30 June 1924, CO.533 file 34378, (C.O./533/320)
3. E.D. Morel to J.H. Thomas, June 1924, CO.533 file 34378 (CO/533/320)

view vilified.' He recommended the appointment of L.S. Woolf to the Committee because he and Woolf had drawn up the Africa policy pamphlet for the Labour party.

E.D. Morel and Leonard Woolf were included on the Committee on land which was to be chaired by Lord Islington. Its terms of reference were to consider the system of 'native' tenure and usage of land in West and East Africa, the laws in force and the effect of their application upon those systems, particularly in regard to the transfer of land to 'non-natives', and to report what amendments were desirable, if any, having regard to the present and future well-being of the 'native' population and to the economic development of the dependencies concerned.[1]

Gupta writes that the Labour party's 'colonial experts managed to ensure that the Labour Government would live up to its ideals about a positive colonial policy.'[2] He suggests that Morel and the A.C.I.Q. persuaded the Government to set up these committees which, he seems to suggest, would have led to a radical reassessment of colonial policy in line with African interests. However, it seems to the present writer that Thomas did not intend the Committees to come forward with any radical proposals. As Brett suggests, Thomas set up these all-party committees 'to find others to take his decisions for him'[3] because he did not understand the problems. It was not only the A.C.I.Q. which recommended the setting up of the committees but Conservative M.P.s such as Henn and Ormsby-Gore, businessmen and the cotton lobby. Henn had put forward a motion

1. CO.533 file 34378 (CO/533/320)
2. P.S. Gupta 'Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964' (London, 1975), p.72.
3. E.A. Brett, op.cit., p.181.

in the House of Commons urging that committees should be appointed for East Africa to advise on a programme of economic development. Lord Lugard had suggested that a separate land committee should be appointed. The membership of both East African committees clearly indicates that Thomas was not aiming for a confrontation with the settlers. The only committee which did eventually report, the East African Commission, as will be shown in more detail above, far from supporting African interests, set them back by vigorously supporting white settlement in East Africa. The only committee which appeared hopeful from the African point of view was the Land Committee but the A.C.I.Q.'s terms of reference were toned down by Thomas and the membership was not dominated by pro-Africans. All the committees were advisory and it appears that Thomas had no desire to implement a positive policy which would have led to confrontation with the settlers. His speeches clearly indicate that he had no desire to reform the empire according to the Advisory committees policies which he had outlined in the book which he wrote when he was in opposition. In an interview to 'John Bull' he said that there was, of necessity, a change between 'mere propagandism and the responsibilities of government.'[1] Thomas particularly mentioned East African policy as an example where he had found the policies worked out in opposition to be inappropriate. At a banquet on 15 July, he declared that the 'Labour Government were anxious and determined that their successors should not be able to say that the empire was less great or noble because of their administration.'[2]

1. 'John Bull', 31 May 1924.
2. 'The Times', 15 July 1924.

At another luncheon at the South Africa Club he declared that people should get rid of class feeling and class prjudice and try to establish confidence in each other.[1] The Labour press did not support Thomas's opinions. The 'New Leader' stated that 'we think it almost the gravest mistake which a Labour party could commit to ignore the fact that a process which is usually called the class struggle is the most vital factor of our lives.'[2] However the 'Daily Sketch' was rejoicing in the fact that J.H. Thomas was a 'great Imperialist'. 'No one will be surprised if one of these days J.H. Thomas comes to the House of Commons with a red, white and blue tie and a Union Jack pinned in his coat. Since he went to the Colonial Office Mr. Thomas has become a great Imperialist.'[3] Labour had not shown a very lively interest in colonial affairs but J.H. Thomas was out to change all that, thought the 'Daily Sketch'. Thomas was proving a better 'imperialist' than a Conservative Colonial Secretary. There was no likelihood as long as he remained at the Colonial Office that the A.C.I.Q.'s policy would be implemented.

Although most Labour M.P.s did not show any great interest in colonial affairs those that did formed the Labour Commonwealth Group during the first Labour Government. It was formed on the initiative of Dr. Haden-Guest and was the first attempt by Labour members of the House of Commons to formulate and advance constructive imperial policy but it met with 'no enthusiasm from the Government'.[4] It does not seem to have had much connection with the A.C.I.Q.

1. 'Westminster Gazette', 30 July 1924
2. 'New Leader', 14 November 1924.
3. 'Daily Sketch', 5 May 1924.
4. R. Lyman 'The First Labour Government' (London,1957)p.216.

Lansbury writes in his memoirs that together with T. Johnston, H. Snell and others, he formed the group. He became chairman after the death of W.S. Royce,[1] the first chairman. Lansbury believed that the Group was one of the most influential in the party and was destined to exercise 'great influence on Colonial and Dominion policy.' It met every Monday during Parliamentary Sessions and discussed topics of mutual interest with representatives from India, the Dominions and the Colonies. According to Lansbury, all the members were strongly anti-imperialist: 'all agreed that the British Labour movement must lead the way in establishing a Commonwealth of Nations - that is a Federation of Nations coming together as free and equal partners in a Commonwealth representative of all the people at present living under the British flat.' They believed that India could gain full and complete political and economic freedom without bloodshed and violence.[2]

Tom Johnston says in his memoirs that he and Lansbury shared some serious misgivings on the general attitude of the Labour party to the British Empire and they teamed up to get the Labour Commonwealth Group started.[3] He thought that most members of the Labour party had inherited from the old Whigs via the radicals a curious, if undefined, prejudice of antagonism to the Empire which perhaps was a hangover from the Boer War. The assumption that all colonial development was imperialist and anti-socialist seemed to him 'irrational and absurd'. The standard of trusteeship in the colonial parts of the Empire was

1. Royce was an ex-Conservative who had a superiority complex about the Africans. Gupta, op.cit.,p.55.
2. G. Lansbury, 'My Life', pp.269-70
3. T. Johnston, 'Memories' (London, 1952),pp.49-50.

improving. If it was impossible to get common purpose and action among peoples who had become accustomed to acknowledge one symbol of unity - the King - and who settled their disputes by Privy Council arbitration, there was a poor chance of the League of Nations succeeding outside the Empire. There was no sense in leaving the Carlton Club to take all the interest in the Empire so the Labour Commonwealth Group had been formed. Although it was numerically small, never more than twenty or thirty , it acquired a knowledge of the facts and 'gradually' effected a change in the outlook of the party towards the confederation of British peoples. But as these views indicate it was not putting forward any radical policies for the colonies. Its main aim seemed to be to support the Empire. Some in the group, particularly Haden-Guest, were interested in the idea of an empire free trade area.

Tom Johnston used his position as editor of 'Forward' to put forward his views. He attacked 'Whig theories about the Colonies' and suggested that, properly reformed and run, the Empire might be made into 'the greatest lever for human emancipation the world has ever known.'[1] Harry Snell, another founder member of the Commonwealth Labour Group, became its secretary for seven years suceeding Haden-Guest. He was also convinced that the attitude that the Labour party had inherited from a generation of anti-colonial radicals and Liberals needed revision.[2] He believed that the main intention of the empire-builders had been to open up opportunities for capital investment, to exploit the minerals to be found in Africa and elsewhere and to secure desirable areas for settlement. England

1. 'Forwards', 26 July 1924.
2. H. Snell, 'Men, Movements and Myself' (London,1936), pp.210-212.

had not taken possession of the colonies for religious or philanthropic reasons; some people may have acted with these motives but the main driving force was the economic one. If the situation had not been hopelessly prejudiced by irreversible fact, Snell would have asked himself whether any European power had any right to be in Africa at all. However, the process of economic exploitation and the political invasion of the tropical areas by the white men had gone far beyond the possibility of retreat. Therefore, the old policy of abandonment was out of date; the most helpful alternative was to try to develop the colonial possessions on lines which would enrich and ennoble the 'native' peoples and prepare them gradually to take their place in the British Commonwealth of Nations. Snell thought that through attending the meetings of the Commonwealth Labour Group, Labour members had a better knowledge of imperial problems than any other section of the House. The attendance grew until in the last session before the fall of the Second Labour Government it numbered an average of fifty members.

The Commonwealth Labour Group did not see the Empire in quite the flagwaving terms that J.H. Thomas saw it, nor as an evil to be abolished as some members of the I.L.P. and the Marxists saw it, but as an opportunity for economic co-operation. Lansbury worked on a policy for the bulk purchase by the state of food and other commodities from the Colonies and Dominions and Tom Johnston studied such problems as schemes to exchange Scottish salted herring for Jamaica citrus fruits. The Group kept Labour M.P.s informed of colonial and dominion developments but it did not make Labour colonial policy. It did not put forward

a comprehensive colonial policy. The members of the group seemed to be more willing to discuss the idea of imperial preference than most members of the Labour party who remained committed to free trade. The group did not show much interest in the problems of the Africans.

Thomas's 'imperialist' outlook was again shown over his attitude to the continuing problem of the Indians in Kenya. The Committee arrived from India in June 1924 to put the Indian point of view to the Colonial Secretary, over the franchise, land in the highlands, and Indian immigration into Kenya. Thomas told them that 'the sole and exclusive ground on which he would decide the question was whether the immigration of outsiders interferes with the ultimate well-being of the natives.'[1] The position was that he was considering an application from Kenya for a new Immigration Bill and concurrently considering representation from the Committee that there was no justification for such a Bill. Mr. Rangachariar asked him how the question would be decided and Thomas replied that the responsibility was his but he proposed to determine the matter in consultation with his colleagues. It was not a racial question, nor was the Bill aimed against Indians. The Indian Committee also asked Thomas to read a memo from them which criticised the decisions of the 1923 White Paper on the questions of the franchise and the Highlands. Thomas said that he was dead against the attitude of non-co-operation of the Indians and would make no change in the existing constitution until it had been given a fair trial. However, he promised to consider the Committee's point of view and that, when a decision was taken, he would issue a reasoned statement,

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1. C.O.533 file 30157 , (CO/533/320)

explaining the grounds on which he had reached a decision.

The question of the Indians in Kenya came before the Cabinet on 9 July 1924. J.H. Thomas had prepared a memo for discussion[1] and Lord Olivier, the Secretary of State for India, had made some comments on Thomas's memo.[2] In his memorandum, Thomas stated that he had seen the Committee from India, they had found it impossible to agree on any figures of past immigration and emigration of Indians. The question was not whether there should be Indian artisans or traders in the country but whether there was a sufficient number of Indian traders and artisans already there. The policy that the Colonial Secretary proposed to endorse was that of Mr. W. Churchill at the time of the Wood-Winterton proposals when Churchill said that if the danger of a large influx of Indians arose, he held himself entirely free to take any action which might be necessary. In order to judge when the necessity had arisen there should be a statistical department set up in Kenya whose main job would be to keep accurate information of the place or origin, occupation and destination of all races arriving in Kenya, with similar infom ation for those leaving Kenya. This department would also investigate the economic requirements of the country in the way of labour.

Thomas thought that this policy would remove the suspicion that the wholesale exclusion of Indians was contemplated and should also satisfy the large body of local opinion that was convinced that the Indian was retarding the African. They should indicate to those political elements in Kenya which were actively anti-Indian

1. Cabinet Paper 375(24)
2. Cabinet Paper 383(24)

that while H.MG. were not prepared to meet their views, the principle embodied in the White Paper that 'native' interests must be paramount would, if necessary, be applied as firmly to the limitation of immigration from India as to any other question.

It had been found that the immigration figures used by the settlers to justify the bill were inaccurate, and the Government of India had strongly declared that there was no case for imposing Settler policy. He feared that if a law was passed restricting immigration into Kenya, the Government of India might retaliate and pass a corresponding law in India.

In his notes on Thomas' proposals Lord Olivier expressed general agreement. However, he felt that the questions of the franchise and the reservation of the land in the Highlands could not be ignored. He was concerned whether the land that had been offered to the Indians was good land. He was not completely happy about Thomas's policy on these questions and he also felt that it should be made plain that the question of immigration should be considered generally and not only in relation to the Indians. He thought that Churchill's words, which Thomas as proposing to endorse, were not unobjectionable and should be changed to read 'If danger ever arises of such an influx of immigrants of whatever class, race, nationality or character as may be likely to be prejudicial to the economic interests of the natives,' the Colonial Secretary would be free 'to take any action which may be necessary'. The Cabinet agreed to this modification proposed by Lord Olivier but accepted Thomas's main point that a ban on immigration could be imposed in the future if the Colonial Secretary felt it

necessary in the 'interests of the natives'.[1] Thomas announced his policies for the Indians in Kenya in the House of Commons on 7 August 1924.[2] Indian comment was unfavourable. Dr. T.B. Sapru, a moderate Indian leader, stated that 'the present decision of the Colonial Office once again proves that in any conflict between the Government of India and even a Crown Colony, the former must go under.'[3] Gandhi remarked that the 'betrayal both of Africans and Indians in Kenya makes the wrong almost too prodigious for poor India to deal with.'[4] No progress had been made towards implementing a policy of equal rights in East Africa. Despite the rhetoric about African interests, in effect, the interests of the white settlers were paramount. The communal franchise was preserved and Wedgwood's pledge was ignored. The best land in Kenya was still reserved for the whites, Indians and Africans were left with less fertile land. Indian immigration was not to be stopped but a tight check was to be kept on the number of Indians in Kenya and a ban could be established if it was felt necessary.

After settling the Indian question, mainly in the settlers' favour, Thomas set sail for South Africa; the Dominion that preserved a rigid colour bar and where white interests were paramount to those of the Africans. The 'Daily Express' praised Thomas for making the trip and hoped that he would educate the other members of the Cabinet into the full meaning of the empire.[5]

1. Cabinet Conclusions, 40(24)13 Gupta implies that Olivier prevented Thomas from re-establishing the ban. However, all that Olivier had changed was some of Churchill's words to make them less offensive to the Indians. The policy that a ban could be imposed still stood.
2. H.C.Deb.,5s.,col.3111, 7 August 1924.
3. Quoted, R.G. Gregory, 'India and East Africa' (Oxford,1971) p.280.
4. ibid.
5. 'Daily Express', 9 August 1924.

Before he set sail, Thomas made a speech at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. He declared that he was proud of the Exhibition and the Empire it represented. Nothing could be more mistaken than the idea that Labour was hostile towards the Empire. It was prompted wholly and solely by the desire that the British Empire should be worthy of the idea it embodied and the motherland which gave it birth. 'Labour realises that it has good reasonto be proud of the British Empire. It knows the part that working men have played in the buildingof the imperial edifice. It realises that the foundations were laid, not only by traders and explorers in search of wealth or fame, but also by humble men and women of British stock who left these islands for distant parts of the world, seeking only to secure a livelihood which was denied them at home. Labour knows how these men and women, toiling in the far places of the world brought prosperity to those lands as well as to themselves and made them part, as it were, of the homeland they had left.'[1]

Thomas got on well in South Africa and managed to persuade General Hertzog to send a representative to the Imperial Conference which was shortly to be held in London, (whereas previous to Thomas's visit he had decided not to send a representative).[2] The Colonial Secretary travelled from Cape Town to Basutoland and back in ten days making tactful speeches en route. The visit seems to have remained in Thomas's memory for in his memoirs he does not discuss any of the policy decisions which he had to make as Colonial Secretary but devotes practically the whole chapter on his period at the Colonial Office to his trip to South Africa.[3]

1. 'The Times', 9 August 1924.
2. G. Blaxland, 'J.H. Thomas: A Life for Unity' (London,1964)
3. J.H. Thomas, 'My Story' (London,1937)

He arrived back in England on 29 September 1924, laden with spears, oranges, sugar and parrots. It is significant that Thomas never mentioned in his speeches the problems of the black Africans and came back having won the praise of the white South Africans.

One problem that Thomas did deal with in September was the question of the Government of Kenya and the exchange of land with Lord Delamere who wanted to exchange 21,000 acres of farming land close to the Uganda railway for 63,000 acres of sheep-grazing country in a more remote area. The problem was whether any Africans would be alienated from their land. The Governor proposed acceptance of the exchange but in a letter on 24 September 1924, Thomas asked for more consideration of the question. The matter of 'natives' on unalienated Crown land required the most careful attention; he would not be able to defend removal of the land from the 'natives' simply because they did not have a legal right to the land. However, the Labour Government fell before the matter was settled and Thomas's successor, L.S. Amery, approved the scheme for the exchange of land soon after he came into office.[1]

Before the advent of the first Labour Government, Leonard Woolf had written an article discussing the reception that a Labour Colonial Secretary would receive: 'He must reckon on a storm in the capitalist press. He must expect the furious and dangerous hostility of Local Europeans. But he won't do any good otherwise. His work cannot be done without large loss to a few hundred wealthy people who will fight like cats in a corner.'[2] Thomas had

1. Cmd. 2,500, August 1925, p.9.
2. 'Problems of East Africa', Leonard Woolf Papers, Misc. section, Africa.

created the opposite effect. When he left the Colonial Office, the 'capitalist' press praised him. 'The Times' felt that he need have no fear that anyone would be able to say that the great British Commonwealth had lost prestige because a working man had occupied the position of Colonial Secretary.[1] 'The Sunday Times' also believed that he was 'one of the few successes of the Labour Government.'[2] The Labour press tended to ignore Thomas's period at the Colonial Office. The 'New Leader' was concerned at his lack of realisation of the importance of the class struggle.[3] 'The New Statesman' concluded from the experience of the Labour Government that the party lacked any 'distinctive imperial policy' and that a clear Imperial policy should be formulated.[4] John Scurr suggested in the 'Socialist Review', that a Labour policy for the Empire should include control leading to ownership of transport and communications, development of public works and utilities in Crown Colonies, education for the coloured people in agriculture and compulsory general education, the preservation of the lands for the 'natives', control of all exports and imports between various parts of the Empire, an Imperial Economic Committee, co-operation between those engaged in industries not yet developed on a mass production basis, family migration, a 48 hour week and a factory code and, where white and coloured workers laboured side by side, the white rate should prevail.[5]

Thomas had not striven to achieve these things. This

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1. 'The Times' 6 November 1924.
2. 'Sunday Times', 9 September 1924.
3. 'New Leader', 14 November 1924; 10 April 1925.
4. 'New Statesman', 11 October 1924.
5. 'Socialist Review', No.130, August 1924, pp.6-16

made people think that the Labour party did not have a distinctive policy for Africa. However, the policy was there (The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy)[1] but Thomas had not had the time or the inclination to put it into effect. As R. Miliband writes, the Government had no thoughts of blazing new trails in colonial policy; J.H. Thomas accepted continuity of policy as a matter of conviction and not as the inevitable consequence of the Government's minority position.[2] Wedgwood's view that the slogan of the Government was 'we must not annoy the Civil Service'[3] seems to be true for Thomas's period at the Colonial Office. As Lyman writes the Labour Government provided an amalgamation of Conservative and Liberal imperial policy.[4] It offered nothing distinctively different from the other parties. However, Snell thought that the Government had 'managed the business of the country with dignity and efficiency and, in spite of the campaign of slander to which they were subjected immediately they assumed office, the country as a whole was proud of the fact that a body of workmen from factory, mine and office could with strong and capable hands govern the greatest Empire that the world had known.'[5] However, as Gregory writes, with one exception, Thomas left British policy in Kenya essentially the same as Devonshire had left it. His only concession to the Indians was his decision that no immediate restriction was needed on Indian immigration.[6] On the other points at issue concerning the Indians

1. 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy' (The Labour Party, 1920)
2. R. Miliband, 'Parliamentary Socialism', (London, 1964) p.111.
3. J.C. Wedgwood, 'My Fighting Life' (London, 1941) p.186.
4. Lyman, 'The First Labour Government' (London, 1953) pp.214-216.
5. H. Snell, 'Men, Movements and Myself' (London, 1936) pp.214-219.
6. R.G. Gregory, op.cit., p.282.

in Kenya, the franchise and land in the highlands, Thomas had decided not to implement Wedgwood's pledges or the policy of the A.C.I.Q.

Thomas was content to maintain general continuity with the work of his predecessors. This disappointed the experts of the Imperial Advisory Committee who had hoped for a policy of change, especially in Kenya. Leonard Woolf, the secretary of the Committee, wrote in his memoirs that although the time was too short, the programme too crowded, and the voting strength too small for the Government to take any major steps in carrying out Labour's colonial policy, 'nevertheless, the record of Ramsay MacDonald's Government in Asia and Africa seemed to me and a good many other people very disappointing, by failing to carry out its promises in cases where it could and should have done so.'[1]

It could be said in extenuation of Thomas's performance at the Colonial Office that the Labour party had no majority in the House of Commons, that the time available to him was very short and that his room for manoeuvre was severely impeded by the fact that he was a member of the first Labour Government of all time. A case could be made out that Thomas was successful in proving that the empire could be governed by a working-class Colonial Secretary without it suffering any major disasters. Ramsay MacDonald's first Labour Government, it could be argued, proved that the Labour party was capable of governing Britain and the empire. If the Labour party had tried more radical measures, it might have been defeated earlier and the people of the country may have felt that it was not 'safe' to entrust the government of the country to the Labour party.

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1. L.S. Woolf, 'Downhill all the Way' (London,1967),p.236.

The Liberal party may have been restored as the major opposition party to the Conservatives. The real significance of the 1924 election was that, although the Labour party did badly, the Liberals did much worse. It could be said that the Labour Government of 1924 had proved that it was 'safe' to entrust the government of Britain and the empire to the Labour party. Having proved itself, the Labour party could then wait until it achieved a full majority before it implemented its radical reforms.

However, this line of argument is not completely convincing. The main problem was that the Labour leaders did not seem to be particularly worried about their minority position. There was no real indication that the Labour leaders had prepared radical reforms which they wanted to implement but which they were prevented from implementing by the Liberals. There was no real indication that the Labour leaders had plans for changing Britain and the empire to give more power to the working class of Britain and the indigenous peoples of the colonies. This particularly applied to Thomas. He did not give the impression that he would have behaved differently if the Labour party had had a majority of a hundred seats over the other parties. He did not appear irked by his party's minority position. He continually emphasised that a policy of continuity should be followed in colonial affairs which ever party was in power. In a number of ways, Thomas could have taken decisions which were more in line with the policy that he had outlined in his book 'When Labour Rules' but he deliberately chose not to do so. If he had meant to follow a pro-African colonial policy, he could have taken up MacDonald's suggestion that Morel should

be his Under-Secretary but, as has been shown, he rejected him, precisely because of his views on Africa. Thomas could have honoured Wedgwood's pledge about trying to abolish communal franchises. Thomas could also have ended the reservation of the best land in Kenya, the land in the Highlands, to the white settlers. These two points were Labour party policy before Thomas became Colonial Secretary but he did nothing to implement them. He followed the advice of his civil servants on these questions and not the advice of the Labour party's A.C.I.Q. It could be argued that, since Thomas was not very knowledgeable about colonial affairs, he did the right thing in setting up committees to provide him with advice. However, Thomas chose to staff the committees, not with a bias towards people who were sympathetic to the Labour party's declared policy but with a bias towards people who were recommended by the civil service as likely to provide 'sensible', moderate advice and, in Thomas's own phrase, 'people who had not got particular 'fads' about Africa'. The Labour member chosen for the East Africa Commission was Major Church, a right winger, who had shown no interest in African affairs. The land committee was the only one which appeared at all hopeful from the point of view of Labour's policy but there was no indication that if it had produced a radical report Thomas would have followed it. When the East Africa Commission produced a pro-settler report, Thomas endorsed it.[1] In his speeches, Thomas gave the impression that the Labour party was in favour of the empire. It seems that Thomas followed the policy that he thought was best, not the policy that he felt he was forced to follow by the circumstances.

If Thomas had followed a more positive pro-African

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1. See pp.156-157.

colonial policy there is no evidence to show that the Liberal party would have voted against him. Most Liberal M.P.s who showed an interest in Africa supported a pro-African policy. J.H. Harris, the secretary of the A.S.A.P.S., was a Liberal M.P. at this time, and J. Hope Simpson, another Liberal M.P. was very active in trying to safeguard Indian interests in Kenya against those of the settlers. During the next Parliament, the two Liberals who showed an interest in Africa, asked 55 questions which were hostile to the Kenyan Administration and only 2 which were supportive.[1] As Brett writes, over Africa, the Liberals appear to have identified with the Labour party activists whose principal concern was to protect the Africans from settler pressures.[2]

Thomas followed a policy of continuity from conviction, not as a result of the Government's minority position. As Woolf writes, he failed to carry out Labour's promise in cases where he 'could and should have done so'. In 1936 Thomas became Colonial Secretary again in a Conservative-dominated National Government. This was the logical outcome to his emphasis on following policies which maintained continuity with Conservative policy.

After Thomas's period of 'imperialist' colonial policy, the experts of the A.C.I.Q. became determined to give their policy more publicity so that next time there was a Labour Government the policy would not be ignored. They were also concerned that Thomas had given the impression that the Labour party was 'imperialist'. Many of the other leaders such as MacDonald and Clynes, as Fischer[3] shows, also gave the

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1. E.A. Brett, op.cit.,pp60-61.
2. ibid.
3. G. Fischer, 'Le Parti Travailliste et la Decolonisation de l'Inde', (Paris, 1966) pp133-154.

impression that the Labour party was pro-imperial. Gupta[1] thinks that it is incorrect to paint a picture, as Fischer does, of the Labour party as pro-imperial and anti-European in the 'twenties and 'thirties. Gupta states that Leys and Brockway were 'educating the party on the need to maintain an imperial standard in favour of equal rights'. However, Brockway devoted most of his attention to India during the interwar period[2] and, as far as Africa was concerned, Leys was not having much success in converting the leadership to the policy of equal rights, as was shown by Thomas's period at the Colonial Office. He was not to have much more success with Passfield later.[3] The problem was that there were many different view points within the Labor party about the empire. The party conference seemed to show a strong negative reaction to the idea of empire. The A.C.I.Q. was trying to work out a policy of reforming the empire. However, the leadership and most members of the P.L.P. did not give the impression that they regarded the reform of the empire as urgent. Those M.P.s who were interested in the empire, and belonged to the Labour Commonwealth Group, seemed to be mainly concerned with schemes for economic co-operation and trade with the Dominions rather than attaching priority to African rights.[4] When MacDonald became Prime Minister, he seemed less keen on enforcing the idea of an 'imperial standard of equal rights' than he had been in 1907. The low priority he attached to enforcing African rights is shown by the fact that he chose Thomas as Colonial Secretary rather than

1. P.S. Gupta, op.cit., p.132.
2. Interview with A.F. Brockway, 24 July 1973.
3. See Chapter 6.
4. Haden Guest, a member of the Labour Commonwealth Group tried to commit the party to adopting empire free trade. He failed and joined the Conservatives for a while before returning to the Labour party in the thirties.

Wedgwood, Morel or even Olivier. This decision indicated that MacDonald did not want too much trouble from the Colonial Office and did not want a direct confrontation with the settlers. The problem was that the A.C.I.Q. might make Labour policy for the African colonies but their labours were in vain, unless they could secure the appointment of a Colonial Secretary who was likely to put their policy into effect. Theoretically, the Labour party believed in reform of the empire in Africa but, in practice, under Thomas, it had pursued a policy of continuity.

CHAPTER 4.

DEFINING THE POLICY

The Labour Party Conference which took place in October 1924 just before the General Election on 29 October 1924, passed a motion on Imperial Affairs. It was moved by Fenner Brockway of the I.L.P. and declared that 'this conference considers that the time is long overdue for a determined stand by organised Labour against the crimes committed by the British ruling class in the furtherence of its Imperialism. It therefore demands that steps be taken forthwith: (1) to stop the persecution of workers for political or industrial reasons, particularly in India and Egypt and to secure the release of all who are suffering imprisonment for their opposition to British Imperialism. (2) To provide adequate protection for the subject races of the Empire in their struggle for freedom. (3) To find ways and means of linking up British working class organisations, both industrial and political, with those of the wage-earning population of India, Egypt, South Africa etc., with a view to the speedy attainment of self-government throughout the British Empire. (4) The Conference is moreover of the opinion that 'in order to hasten the grant of a full measure of Home Rule to India, steps should be taken to summon a Conference of Representatives of the various parties of India who shall be invited to prepare a scheme of self-government for discussion with the British Government.'[1] The resolution was seconded by Mr. Hands and carried unanimously. It is highly unlikely that the Government would have put this resolution into effect if it had remained in power. The I.L.P.'s resolutions on Imperialism were usually passed unanimously but never acted upon. These type of resolutions bore no resemblance to what the Labour

1. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1924, p.179.

party did in office. The leadership was not as anti-imperialist as the rank-and-file.

In East Africa, the Labour Government had done very little to improve the position of the Africans. 'East Africa', the pro-White journal, reported that 1924 had definitely been East Africa's best year. After a period of depression, the territories were coming into their own, railway building and harbour construction works were being pushed forward, subsidiary transport facilities were increasing, planters and farmers were getting better price for their crops, 'native' production was greatly augmenting spending power and, consequently, the demand for goods manufactured in Europe and the business world was confident and optimistic.[1] This is further proof that the A.C.I.Q. were unsuccessful in ensuring that the Labour Government lived up to its ideals about a positive colonial policy. For the white settlers to be able to state that the year of the Labour Government was their most successful ever showed that the Labour Government had not been at all vigorous in ensuring that the interests of the Africans were paramount in East Africa.

Norman Leys showed how the Africans' rights were being ignored in East Africa. He had written a pamphlet on 'Land Law and Policy in Tropical Africa'[2] in 1922, and, in 1924, he published a full length book on Kenya.[3] This was an indictment of British rule in the Colony. It received favourable reviews in the Labour press. In the 'New Leader', Leonard Woolf wrote that he had 'never read any book on that subject which is as good, as illuminating and

1. 'East Africa', 20 November 1924.
2. N. Leys, 'Land Law and Policy in Tropical Africa' (League of Nations Union, 1922)
3. N. Leys, 'Kenya' (London, 1924)

moving as Dr. Leys's. It was one of the most tremendous indictments of 'imperialism' that had ever been written. Leys was passionately opposed to the imperialist, capitalist, exploitation of the white man but he stated facts which showed both sides of the picture'.[1] Woolf did not agree with all Leys's theories and opinions but he thought that no other book stated the facts so powerfully, so vividly, or so truthfully.

Leys believed that the black man was being exploited in Kenya under a system which deprived him of his land and then made him work for the white man for low wages in order to pay the taxes that were imposed upon him. The social effects of this were deplorable and dangerous leading to the break up of family life, disease and alcoholism. Leys wanted the land to be restored to the Africans, a reform of the inequitable taxation system and a programme of African education which would eventually equip the Africans to rule themselves. Leys believed that education should not just train the Africans to be better producers and workers as Conservative policy emphasised[2] but that education should be provided on an equal basis so that the Africans would be trained in law and administration as well as the basic skills necessary for efficient production. Leys put the emphasis on a policy of equal rights for black and white in the colonies. The 'New Statesman' thought that Leys's book was too important to be ignored. The British people should insist that what waswrong in Kenya should be put right without delay by political and economic reforms. Some of the points put by Leys might be answerable but the paper doubted whether 'we shall get satisfaction from anything

1. 'New Leader', 16 January, 1925, p.4.
2. Memorandum by the Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies (Cmd.2374) Parliamentary Papers, 1924-25.

less than a searching inquiry by a Royal Commission.'[1]

However, Thomas's commissions were abolished by the new Conservative Colonial Secretary, except for the East African Commission which visited Kenya early in 1925 under the chairmanship of W. Ormsby-Gore, the new Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office. It reported in 1925,[2] stating that the 'ideal before government is not merely that of holding the balance between a series of interests, native or non-native, but of serving the highest welfare of the communities as a whole. In fact, the development of the community sense is one of its paramount tasks.' It was the duty of European Administrators to take advantage of the intelligence and capacities of such 'natives' as have risen in the scale of civilisation and 'to educate a less efficiently equipped people to become better and more efficient.'[3] The Commission believed that settler and African interests were in harmony and advocated what came to be known as the Dual policy, which had first been defined by Sir Robert Coryndon, Governor of Kenya. It declared that 'the Dual Policy of increasing the quantity and quality of production on native lands pari passu with the development of European cultivation is accordingly necessary, if only on financial grounds...We feel that the sincere acceptance by officials, unofficials and natives of the Dual Policy inaugurated by the late Sir Robert Coryndon is the necessary first step to that stability of economic conditions without which real progress cannot be maintained.' The Commission called for a considerable amount of economic development, including the building of

1. 'New Statesman', 13 December 1924.
2. 'East Africa: Report of the East African Commission', Cmd.2387 (1925).
3. ibid,p.22.

railways and supported white settlement, which had 'added greatly to the productivity of the country'.[1] The Report was not in favour of any schemes for federation in East Africa. The Government of Kenya and the white settlers were pleased with the report. However, Mr. Linfield, the Liberal representative, wrote a supplement which was critical of some parts of the main report. He suggested that the Africans could produce more for export, if they were working for themselves, than they could if they worked under the white settlers. Sir Donald Cameron, the Governor of Tanganyika, thought that Linfield's supplement was better than the main report which, he thought, had made some of it recommendations 'on nothing more than station gossip.'[2] Yet, despite the inadequacy of the report, it became the basis of a 'comfortable consensus about Kenyan politics.'[3] From then on, there was a tendency for the work of people like Leys and McGregor Ross to be regarded as 'extremist' and ignored.

The 'New Statesman'[4] thought that the report had not given a clear answer to the crucial question of whether the aim of British policy in Kenya was to make African or European interests paramount. It was more in sympathy with the ideas of Mr. Linfield than those of the Labour representative, Major Church. It appeared that Church had been won over to the settlers point of view as a result of the hospitality he had received in East Africa. He, Ormsby-Gore and the settlers all got on very well. They made 'themselves very popular in Kenya, and showed themselves

1. ibid, p.149.
2. Quoted, E.A. Brett, op.cit., p.182.
3. ibid.
4. 'New Statesman', 16 May 1925, p.127.

genuinely anxious to get at the real truth', according to the Chairman of the settler organisation.[1]

Norman Leys disagreed with the report. He wrote a memo for the A.C.I.Q.,[2] stating that he thought that there was a shortage of labour in Kenya. The labour did not exist to cultivate the land which the settlers had alienated. He was also sceptical about the development of railways. He thought that unless railway development served well-populated areas, it could only transfer labourers from imperfectly developed areas to undeveloped areas and would add to the number employed on useless railways. Kenya, thought Leys, was like a cat choked with cream or an engine smothered with oil. There was already far more capital than there were workers to earn interest on it. The Europeans in Kenya wanted to see more people going out to Kenya and more economic development because land sales and railway contracts filled their pockets. The key to the situation was that many fortunes were made in Kenya by selling land and some by profiteering. Lord Delamerehad control, at one time or another, of at least 250,000 acres, most of which had been acquired by dodges. He had got rid of about 50,000 acres and his great aim was to get men with money from England to go out from England and buy another 10,000 acres from him.

Leys stated that the Africans in Kenya were paid low wages of only 8 - 10 shillings a month and, because they were miserably poor, suffered from undernourishment, scanty clothing and many preventable diseases. They also had to

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1. Quoted, E.A. Brett, op.cit.,p.181. When the Commission returned Ormsby-Gore became an hono rary member of Church's union and, Church joined the Colonial Advisory Committee on Education.
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo No.14, March 1925.

pay a high proportion - three tenths - of their earnings in direct taxation, whereas Europeans only paid thirty shillings per head per year. The three M.P.s had given a false picture of the situation, having been accompanied by official and non-official Europeans chosen by the authorities. Although some thought that there was a new spirit of concern for the African among the Europeans, this was, in fact, not the case. All that had happened was that they were learning the need for caution in the face of the awakening public opinion in the United Kingdom. Leys thought that the true facts should be exposed in Parliament so that public opinion would put pressure on the Colonial Office and the Government in Nairobi to introduce reform.

Leys also wrote an article on the report for the 'New Leader' in which he stated that Mr. Linfield had shown an independence of judgment which had prevented him from believing the fairy tales of the official apologists, as the Labour member, Major Church had done.[1] Major Church wrote a memo for the A.C.I.Q. in which he defended himself.[2] He thought that Leys had a large capacity for exaggeration. He disliked Leys' claim to infallibility and believed that 'from the Labour party point of view' Leys's book and memoranda were dangerous because they pandered to preconceptions about the African situation and therefore were not likely to be subject to the same critical examination as those of objective observers and writers'. Major Church believed that the Labour party should take credit for the character and positive results of the Commission. While being critical, it should make it clear that the constructive proposals in the report, which had been hailed with such

1. 'New Leader', 15 May 1925, p.8.
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo No.16B, May 1925.

enthusiasm in the press, were the results of Labour's first essay in colonial affairs. However, the A.C.I.Q. recommended to the N.E.C., a statement of policy based on Leys's memo rather than Church's report.[1]

The A.C.I.Q. thought that the £10 million projects proposed by the report should wait until the reform of the industrial system of East Africa. The result of capitalist exploitation had been that the Africans of East Africa had been robbed of both land and liberty with economic results inferior to those parts of Africa which had not been subjected to capitalist methods of production.

The Report was discussed in Parliament on 27 July 1925, when Labour's main speakers were J.H. Thomas, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood and Harry Snell. J.H. Thomas, the former Colonial Secretary spoke first,[2] saying that he thought his successor, Leopold Amery, had made no greater mistake than to abolish the Southborough Committee which Thomas had appointed as an all-party committee to advise the Colonial Secretary on East Africa. The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, W. Ormsby-Gore had been a member of the deputation which had asked for such a committee. The ex-Colonial Secretary was also disappointed that the Land Committee on East and West Africa, which he had appointed, was to be abolished. There was need for advice not only from the particular authority that happened to be in power but from all parties that were trying to find a solution independent of purely party considerations. Thomas thought that some of the criticism of the East African Commission was unfair. He believed that the suggestion that the Commission had only

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1. A.C.I.Q., Memo No.16A, May 1925.
2. 187 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 103-113, 27 July 1925.

listened to official opinion which was partial and biased was not justified by a study of the report as a whole. He agreed with Major Church rather than with Norman Leys and the A.C.I.Q. He thought that the Commission should be congratulated on the Report. He was also pleased that the Commission had drawn attention to the need for more education and steps to stop the spread of disease. He hoped that the recommendations of the Commission concerning economic development would be taken up, but he thought that the Government should participate in railway building rather than leave it to private individuals who had urged that the railways should be built. This speech indicated that, if Thomas had been at the Colonial Office when the East African Commission reported, he would have been likely to accept its favourable picture of white settlement in East Africa. The A.C.I.Q.'s policy would have been ignored.

Harry Snell was more critical of East Africa in his speech on the report.[1] He considered that 80 days was not a very long time in which to examine the whole question of East Africa. The report was essentially a polite document issued by three amiable gentlemen who hated to say rough or unpleasant things about anybody. It acknowledged the principle of trusteeship which was now, Snell hoped, the basic principle of Britain's government of her colonies. He believed that the 'natives' had no great desire to swap their heritage of leisure and simple fare for all the strange and questionable luxuries which work for the white man might bring them. Unless Britain was going to develop the African's spiritual qualities it would have been better to have left them to live in their accustomed and ancient ways.

Concerning the concrete recommendations of the report,

1. 187 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 132-138, 27 July 1925.

Snell hoped that the railways would not become mere conduit pipes which wouldd rain away wealth from the locality without supplying the means of livelihood to those in residence. The transport facilities should not be allowed to run ahead of the actual industrial situation. The Europeans had decided that railways should be built for their own benefit and, when a railway passed through a 'native' reserve, the cry was immediately raised that the land contiguous to the railway was no good for 'native' use, and the 'native' was driven away from it or it was urged that he should be moved to a less accessible position. In such a way the Masai had been robbed of their country: plots of land, varying from 5,000 to 300,000 acres, had been given to Europeans for no other reason except that the Europeans coveted the land and it was close to the railways.

On the subject of taxation, Snell thought that the report had been remiss. The 'native' suffered considerable difficulties in paying more than his fair share of taxation. He had to raise between ten and sixteen shillings per year for hut tax, which had to be paid almost entirely out of the material he was able to sell. In order to find markets for his material he often had to make journeys of 40 miles carrying loads of about 60 pounds. Some had to make as many as 5 journeys. The railways should be used to help the 'natives' make these journeys. In contrast to the 'natives', the Europeans paid relatively little of their income in taxation. Income tax had been abolished owing to white pressure and the richest of the Europeans only paid thirty shillings a year in taxation. Snell was glad that the report had recommended that income tax should be reimposed. However, it was not only a question of how taxation was raised, it was also a question of how it was

spent. A very low proportion of the money raised went towards 'native' services and the social effects of this inequality of spending on services were in many respects appalling. The need to pay taxes resulted in the over-selling of crops and consequent food shortages. Some Masai sent their young women to brothels in order to raise the money.

Turning to the question of land, Snell said that the land should be vested in the tribe and not the individual and that no futher alienation should take place until the tribes had all the land that they could use for present and future needs. The 'natives' should not be fobbed off with land of inferior quality which the whites would not have. On the subject of education, Snell thought that there was too much emphasis on imposing English ideas upon the African people. The education of the Africans should develop out of their own lives and experience and the illustrations provided should be African rather than British. However, he hoped that the education provided would be concerned with introducing the Africans into the heritage of the mind rather than just making them technically more efficient as producers. Snell had put forward the main criticisms of the A.C.I.Q. on land labour, taxation and education.

Colonel Wedgwood, the other main Labour speaker in the debate,[1] supported Snell's criticisms. He emphasised the need to follow the 'West African' policy in East Africa. He thought that if the Colonial Office was going to develop cotton-growing in East Africa, it should be grown by the 'natives' themselves working for their own profit and not

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1. 187 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 148-155, 27 July 1925.

working for the profit of Europeans. On the West coast of Africa the system of 'native' production had been tried and it had succeeded. It was the Britian's duty to allow the 'natives' the freedom to cultivate what they liked without interference. They should be allowed to choose between cultivating cotton for themselves or working for the planters producing coffee, maize and other produce. Wedgwood wanted the Government to order the Governor of Kenya to send out instructions to the District Commissioners that they were not to bring pressure upon the chiefs to recruit labour for white planters outside the reserves.

There had been a general tendency to deprive the 'natives' of land, partly to make it available for white settlers and also to drive the 'natives', through lack of opportunity of cultivating for themselves, into the position of a landless exploited proletariat. Wedgwood feared that this practice was now developing in Tanganyika as well as Kenya. The only way to stop it was to allow the 'natives' to develop as they had done on the West Coast where exports had gone up year by year, the populatinn had increased and the country was prospering. In contrast, the population on the East Coast was declining and there was evidence that there were not sufficient able-bodied people on the reserves to produce enough food for themselves, let alone produce for export.

Concerning railway development, Wedgwood thought that if such development were to take place, it should be where the population was and where the work was. The problem was that of finding the labour to build the railways and to develop the farms which would be set up as a result of the railway development. In conclusion, Wedgwood said that it was a frightful responsibility to try to impose a form of civilisation which suited English people best upon

a 'savage' people. Wedgwood's policy would be to 'leave them alone. Give them their freedom. Cease to try to press them into the labour market, whether by driving them off the land or by taxation. Give them the advantage of the taxes you take from them in the shape of improved education, improved sanitation and so on. If you do that, you will build up a real tribute to British rule such as no other Empire in the world has ever shown.' Wedgwood's ideal was an African with his own land, working for himself, free from the impact of Western capitalism. The members of the A.C.I.Q., such as Wedgwood, Snell and Leys were not very keen on the idea of the economic development of Africa because they feared it would lead to exploitation of the African. Others in the party, such as Thomas and the Labour Commonwealth Group, were not against economic development but they did not work out detailed plans for economic development. In general, the Labour party was not very interested in the economic development of the African colonies in the 1920s.[1]

Lord Olivier, the Secretary of State for India in the Labour Government, discussed the report in the House of Lords. He thought that the thing to be done in Kenya was what the Labour party had demanded should be done in their programme and that was to provide land for permanent occupation, ownership and settlement for the 'natives! He also thought that no labour contract should be enforcible under the sanctions of criminal law and quoted from the Labour party's programme (The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy) the demand that every 'native' family should be given sufficient land for support and, if necessary, the

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1. E.A. Brett, op.cit., Chapter 2.

Government should re-enter on alienated land. The Africans would work hard if they were treated decently but if they were hustled about simply in order to compel them to labour they would never work properly.[1]

Lord Olivier also discussed the question of the exchange of land with Lord Delamere which J.H. Thomas had been dealing with towards the end of his period as Colonial Secretary and which Leys had criticised in a memo for the A.C.I.Q.[2] It appeared, said Lord Olivier, that Lord Delamere had 'emerged' from the exchange with an additional 80,000 acres of land when it had been understood that no further land was going to be granted to Europeans. Lord Delamere owned 280 square miles of land in Kenya. The main charge against Lord Delamere was not that he had acted illegally but that he had evaded the law by 'dummying' - putting in 'dummies' whom he financed to acquire further land in their name. The charge had been made openly in Kenya and Lord Olivier wanted to know what the action of the Colonial Government had been in the matter. He moved for Papers for two things;

(1) Correspondence relating to the sanction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies of the employment of 4,000 forced labourers on railway construction now proceeding;

(2) a return of all present holdings of land in Kenya colony exceeding 5,000 acres in extent, and of all past grants or concessions of rights over lands exceeding 5,000 acres, showing in each case the character of the tenure, whether freehold, leasehold or other, and the consideration paid or payable to the Crown for such grants or concessions.[3]

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1. 61 H.L.Deb.,cols. 363-385, 20 May 1925.
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 14, March 1925.
3. 61 H.L.Deb.,5s.,cols. 383-384, 20 May 1925.

As a result of these demands by Lord Olivier, the Conservative Government issued a White Paper in August 1925 concerning the 'Correspondence with the Government of Kenya relating to the exchange of land with Lord Delamere.'[1] The concluding letter from L.S. Amery, the Colonial Secretary, stated that he had approved the exchange because the land which Lord Delamere had relinquished was far more suitable for small holders than the land which he received which was only suitable for sheepfarming on a large scale. The publication of the correspondence did little to quieten the suspicions of the Labour party that Lord Delamere was only concerned with the accumulation of profit to the detriment of the Africans' welfare. The reason for the Labour party's suspicion was that Lord Delamere was the leader of the settler community and had made it plain that he believed strongly in the 'right' of the white settlers to govern in East Africa. He said to Margery Perham, a few years later, that he 'would take land from the Masai tomorrow for farms. I would take it from any nomads. They don't use it. They can't keep it from those who do.'....'Are we to be held back for hundred of years while people not far from zero catch us up?'[2] Delamere had a strong influence on Grigg, the new Governor of Kenya, and was regarded by the A.C.I.Q. as one of the main obstacles to African progress.

The A.C.I.Q. began the task of revising its pamphlet on Africa in 1925[3] in order to try to give more publicity to its policy so that it would not be ignored in the future, as it had been by Thomas. The Committee decided that

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1. Cmd.2500, August 1925.
2. M. Perham, 'East African Journey' (London, 1976), pp.138-139.
3. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 25 March 1925.

Leonard Woolf, the secretary, should undertake the revision and then re-submit the pamphlet to the full committee.[1] Woolf completed this task by 8 July 1925, when the revised version was considered by the committee and it was decided to send it to the French Socialist party for comments, as Woolf hoped that the British and French parties would issue a joint pamphlet on colonial policy.[2] This attempt failed because the French party did not respond to the invitation.

The revised draft did not differ in essential from the earlier pamphlet. There was the same emphasis on the difference between the policies pursued in West and East Africa. The general aim of Labour policy, declared the first pamphlet, should be 'substituting a system based on the common interests of the inhabitants for the existing system based on the economic exploitation of the native by the whites. At the same time Labour must aim at substituting a political system of responsible and representative government for the existing autocracy.'[3] The revised draft quoted the first sentence verbatim but slightly altered the second to read - 'At the same time Labour must aim at ultimately developing a political system of self-government for the existing autocracy.'[4] This was a slightly more definite statement that the ultimate aim was self-government but still no definite time period was given. The revision largely followed the original pamphlet withthe same headings and the same policies - Land and Labour, the Two Land policies in Africa - the European and African, Labour, Government and Self-Government, International Control and Education.

1. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 24 June 1925.
2. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 8 July 1925.
3. 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy (Labour Party, 1920) pp.2-3
4. 'Labour and the Empire: Africa' (first draft) August 1925.

In October, J.F.N. Green[1] produced a memo on the revised pamphlet in which he suggested some points on the exploitation of the labourer and peasant and on finance.[2] On the first point Green thought that the pamphlet should attack hut tax which the 'natives' were forced to pay. He thought that, if the problem of taxes was solved, no whites would want to buy land. He believed that the peasants should be encouraged to form associations for co-operative selling and buying in order to avoid exploitation. He also thought that the question of finance had been avoided and something should be included on this subject. His main idea seemed to be that the Africans should be encouraged to produce to provide the resources and finance to improve their standard of living. Railways would be useful because they would provide a method of exchange. In a postscript, he wrote that the main difficulty he had encountered when speaking to co-operative and Labour party audiences on African affairs was that they wondered why the party did not advocate the immediate introduction of modern democracy. Green had found it difficult to help them to grasp the conditions in Africa or to convey a notion of primitive life and ideas and he thought there should be some amplification of the party's attitude. It is interesting that rank-and-file members of the party seemed to think that the party should move much more quickly towards independence in Africa.

Leys was not so sure about railway development as Green.[3] He thought that the pamphlet should advocate that railways should only be built to thickly populated areas. Those built in other areas were positively injurious unless

1. Green was a civil servant at the Colonial Office who was sympathetic to the Labour party. He was a member of the Fabian Society and the A.C.I.Q. He was more interested in economic development than most of Labour's African experts.
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo No.18A, October 1925.
3. A.C.I.Q. Memo No.18B, November 1925.

accompanied by immigration and cultivation of the soil. Leys also believed that the party should demand that the direct taxation of the poorest, which was the present case in East Africa, should be replaced by the direct taxation of the richest sections of the community. He believed that the events of the last 25 years had made it impossible to follow West African methods without modification. What the party should do was to demand that the non-African immigrants should be made to bear the cost to the countries they lived in, resulting fromtheir presence and demands. If they could not do so they proved themselves to be parasitic on the African population and that would prove that the plantation system was incapable of reform and should be abandoned in East Africa. Leys was one of the few people to realise that the West African system could not be automatically transferred to East Africa. One of the faults of Labour policy was the assumption that the experience of West Africa was automatically relevant to East Africa.

On 18 November 1925, the full Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions made some amendments to the draft African pamphlet to take account of Green's and Leys' points about taxation and railway development. As no answer had been received from the French party, it was recommended that the revised pamphlet should be published.[1] The pamphlet was sent to the National Executive Committee which considered it at a Joint meeting of the N.E.C. and the General Council of the T.U.C. It was resolved 'that the publication of the document be suspended pending an examination thereof by Messrs. J. Ramsay MacDonald M.P., J.H. Thomas M.P., and Arthur Henderson M.P., and that the result of such

1. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 18 November 1925.

examination be reported to the next Joint Meeting.'[1] At the Joint Meeting on 25 March 1929 it was reported by W. Gillies that 'Messrs. J. Ramsay MacDonald M.P., J.H. Thomas M.P., and Arthur Henderson M.P. had examined the memo on 'Labour and the Empire: Africa' as requested and had agreed to its publication as a pamphlet; it was then resolved 'that the publication be proceeded with.'[2] The 'Big Three' did not make any revisions in the pamphlet, accepting the work of the Advisory Committee. The policy now had the definite approval of the leadership.

'Labour and the Empire: Africa' was published in 1926, with the full approval of both the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the General Council of the T.U.C. Thomas, the ex-secretary of state for the Colonies, wrote a preface to the policy statement. He declared that the pamphlet contained the Labour Movement's official policy with 'regard to the Native races of Africa and the territories, inhabited by them, for which the British Government is responsible.' The keynote of the policy was that the Empire, in the words of the Covenant of the League of Nations, should be 'a 'trustee for the well-being of the natives.' The principle of trusteeship was not something that the Labour Movement had discovered with the establishment of the League of Nations. It had always been maintained by the movement as 'springing immediately from the broad principles and ideals of labour.' The pamphlet worked out in detail how the principle should and could be applied in the administration of the African territories. Thomas summarised the main points: first,

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1. Joint Meeting of General Council and N.E.C. Minutes, 28 January 1926.
2. Joint Meeting of General Council and N.E.C. Minutes, 25 March 1926.

'the natives must be assured sufficient supply of land for their support, and therefore the land must be treated as the property of the native communities.' Second, 'the native must, as a worker, be afree man, and hence there must be no slavery, no forced labour and no pressure upon him to work for settlers.' Third, the administration must make itself responsible for educating the 'native' to take his place, both economically and politically, as a free man in the conditions which Western civilisation has imposed upon Africa. The carrying out of this policy would not be a simple task, warned Thomas; Labour would find powerful classes and parties openly or secretly opposed to it. Nevertheless, he considered that it would be one of the most important tasks that the next Labour Government would have to carry through. The fact that Thomas had made so little attempt to put the policies into effect during his own period of office was tactfully ignored. As Thomas was divorced from the civil servants, he was more inclined to accept the advice of the A.C.I.Q. However, his speech on the Colonial Office Vote of 1925 and his acceptance of the 'Report of the East African Commission' had shown that his opinions were well to the right of people like Leys. The Labour party pamphlet was incompatible with the 'Report of the East African Commission' but Thomas ambiguously endorsed both. The Labour party's pamphlet showed how the white settlers were exploiting the Africans in East Africa, which according to the Commission, was not happening. 'Labour and the Empire: Africa' went into more detail about the methods of exploitation than the earlier pamphlet had done. The African population was deprived of its land, and pressure was exerted by government officials to work for the white settlers. 'Forced' labour was sometimes

reverted to and the position of squatter on 'white land' was only granted to theAfricans on condition of a certain amount of wage labour. Breach of labour contract was a criminal offence, and the African was so heavily taxed that he could only obtain the necessary cash by wage labour. Agricultural production by the African on his own land was discouraged. The results of this policy were that labour was bad and discontented. Sanitary and moral conditions were abysmal and, because labour was withdrawn from cultivation in the reserves, there were periodical shortages of food.[1]

The policy advocated in the two pamphlets was the same concerning land and labour. The land should be treated as the property of the African community and labour should be free and not 'forced'. The second pamphlet, on Green's suggestion, inserted a paragraph on taxation which stated that hut tax was too high and should be reduced. Africans who were not fully capable of work should be exempt from direct taxation. The revenue derived from taxation of the Africans ought to be spent on African requirements. Any deficit that might be caused by the reduction of the hut tax should be made up by increased taxation of the white community which was very lightly taxed in comparison with the Africans.[2]

The new pamphlet also incorporated Leys' point about railway development: 'in view of the inadequacy of the labour supply, new railways, while desirable when constructed to thickly populated areas, are positively injurious when constructed to other districts unless accompanied by immigration of cultivators of the soil.[3] The passages

1. 'Labour and the Empire: Africa' (The Labour Party,1926) pp.15-16
2. ibid., p.18.
3. 'Labour and the Empire: Africa' (The Labour Party, 1926)p.21.

on central and local government were more or less identical, in both the 1920 and 1926 versions of the Labour party's policy. On international control the principles were the same. The new pamphlet quoted . Devonshire's White Paper to show that Britain had pledged herself to accept in non-mandated territories the same obligations that were accepted under mandates: "in the administration of Kenya H.M.G. regard themselves as exercising a trust on behalf of the African population and they are unable to delegate or share this trust, the object of which may be defined as the protection and advancement of the native races."[1]

On education the pamphlets outlined the same programme of action, the revised pamphlet updating the figures for spending on African education. Both pamphlets pointed out that no European Governments in any part of Africa had made a serious attempt to give the African the knowledge which alone would make him 'capable of understanding and controlling the circumstances which those governments impose upon him.'[2] The spending on education was still too low to redeem the pledge that Britain was exercising a trust on behalf of the Africans. The Labour party believed that primary education should be accessible to all children, training colleges should be provided for teachers, technical colleges should be set up, and an African university should be established which 'probably should not be like American or European universities but more suited to African needs.

Norman Leys wrote a review of the pamphlet which he had helped to draft in the 'New Leader', in which he declared

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1. Cmd.1922 (1923) p.10.
2. 'Labour and the Empire: Africa' (The Labour Party, 1926) p.25; 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy' (The Labour Party,1920) p.10.

that it was the business of socialists to make sure that when there was a Labour majority in Parliament, the Cabinet and, especially, the Colonial Secretary, would know exactly what things ought to be done in the various imperial dependencies and do them. This was a difficult task because the lands were far away and there were no votes to catch. However, unless something were done, the colonial peoples might turn to rebellion as the only kind of utterance possible to them. The party's special dangers were two; one had been abundantly illustrated by Mr. Thomas's record at the Colonial Office and the other was the kind of socialist policy which consisted in producing policies for Uganda or Hong Kong out of a hat without a knowledge of the facts of life in those places. The Labour party's pamphlet showed how much there was to do and although it painted a black picture, the worst had to be known.[1]

With the publication of 'Labour and the Empire: Africa', the Labour party had a revised and up-to-date colonial policy which had been drafted by experts on Africa such as Leonard Woolf, C.R. Buxton, J.F.N. Green and Norman Leys. It had the official approval of the National Executive Committee of the Labour party, which was responsible for Labour party policy - making, and the General Council of the T.U.C. The leaders of the party had also read and approved the document. Future Labour Governments would not be able to plead ignorance of the party's policy.

A more radical proposal on colonial policy had been discussed at the T.U.C. Conference at Scarborough in September 1925. At this conference a strong motion on Imperialism was moved by Mr. A.A. Purcell M.P. of the Furnishing Trades Association. This stated: "This T.U.C.

1. 'New Leader' 27 August 1926, p.4.

believes that the domination of non-British peoples by the British Government is a form of capitalist exploitation having for its object the securing for British capitalists of (1) cheap sources of raw materials; (2) the right to exploit cheap unorganised labour and to use the competition of that labour to degrade the workers' standards in Great Britain. It declares its complete opposition to Imperialism and resolves: (1) to support the workers in all parts of the British Empire to organise the Trade Unions and political parties in order to further their interests, and (2) to support the right of all peoples in the British Empire to self-determination, including the right to choose complete separation from the Empire."[1]

Supporting the resolution, Mr. Purcell stated that Imperialism was the 'deceased wife's sister of capitalism' and it had come to be 'somewhat of a boomerang' so far as the industrial conditions were concerned in various parts of the world. Imperialism was the worst enemy of the working classes. Its worst crime was that of supplying arms to all belligerents throughout the world, just as during the war it had supplied arms to France and Germany. The horrible condition of India was part of Imperialist policy. The British capitalist class and the capitalist class of every country were one and the same. The second part of the resolution, said Purcell, pointed the way out of the difficulties to the working class of the world. It was the duty of the British trade union movement to assist in the formation of trade unions representing all industries wherever industry was being promoted and to build up an international organisation that would have as

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1. Fifty-Seventh Trade Union Conference Report 1925, pp.553-5.

its base equal wages and working conditions of employment in every sense. The British trade union movement had a great duty to associate themselves with every effort being made in every country to resist Imperialism.[1]

Not surprisingly, Thomas spoke against the resolution,[2] pleading for moderation. He was prepared to say 'Yes' to everything that Mr. Purcell had said about Imperialism and had taken his stand in saying that not one yard of territory should have been added to the British Empire as a result of the war. However, concerning Kenya, Thomas wondered whether the resolution meant that Mr. Purcell wanted self-determination for Kenya. If he thought that, Thomas could only suppose that he knew nothing about the situation. Let the movers of the resolution go to the South African Labour party and tell them what they were talking about. Let them go to Canada and Australia and find out what the workers thought there. Thomas thought that some phrases in the resolution were good and the trade unions should endeavour to stop every form of capitalist exploitation, but he asked Congress not to make itself ridiculous by passing such an absurd resolution for it was absurd and ridiculous to pretend that they were speaking in the interests of the movement when they used such phrases as those used by Purcell. Thomas was replying to the implicit criticism that was made by the motion of his period at the Colonial Office.

However, Harry Pollitt, a communist of the Boilermakers Union, hoped that the argument of Thomas was not going to count.[3] The resolution was simply a clear definition of

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1. Purcell was an M.P. from 1923-24 and 1925-9 and this strong motion indicates that some M.P.s took a stronger line than the A.C.I.Q.
2. Fifty-Seventh T.U.C. Conference Report, 1925, p.554.
3. ibid., pp.554-555.

what the policy of the working class movement should be towards the subject peoples of the Empire. British Imperialism meant appalling conditions amongst the textile workers of Bombay and Calcutta, it meant women going down mines and doing 36 hours at a stretch, and it meant that the people in the colonies had no right of combination and no legal redress. It also meant the slavery that existed in Kenya. To the exploited peoples of the world, Empire simply meant exploitation by capitalists. If Congress passed the resolution, they would give a message of hope and encouragement to their fellow workers all over the world who did not look upon the Union Jack as the last word in economic equity and political freedom. They were not talking about a Wembley Empire[1] but an Empire in which every single yard of territory was drenched in the blood of British soldiers and native warriors who had tried to keep the British soldiers out of their country. Empire simply meant tyranny and exploitation. Pollitt hoped that the T.U.C. would give the answer to the Empire propaganda which the right wing of the movement had been putting out for the last twelve months.

Congress approved of Pollitt's sentiments and, despite Thomas' pleas, the resolution was passed on a card vote by 3,082,000 votes to 79,000. In passing the resolution, the T.U.C. showed that it was not satisfied with Thomas's moderate approach to colonial questions when in office. The resolution went further than the official statements of the Labour party, declaring its complete opposition to Imperialism and supporting the right of all peoples in the British Empire to self-determination. It was another indication that there was a strong anti-imperialist feeling

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1. Thomas had praised the Empire at the Wembley Exhibition, see above p. 138

among a large number of the rank-and-file of the trade unions. However, the General Council ignored the motion, preferring to support the A.C.I.Q. policy statement 'Labour and the Empire: Africa', which was not as forceful as Purcell's motion.

The militant, anti-imperialists suffered a setback at the following Labour Party Conference of 1925 when a less radical, official, resolution on Commonwealth and Colonial policy was passed after a vigorous debate. Clynes moved the motion[1], calling for political and economic relationships between Great Britain, India, the self-governing dominions and the constituent states of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It called on the Government to hold a conference to survey the natural resources of the British Commonwealth of Nations as a whole with a view to the scientific direction of the use of those resources and to prevent their exploitation in the interests of private capitalists. Concerning the tropics, the resolution stated that:"This Conference is of the opinion that the evils of capitalist exploitation of the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the British Commonwealth of Nations and especially the use of primitive tribes as reservoirs of low grade or sweated labour without either regard to their social or moral well being, or to the political and economic dangers involved both to the natives themselves and to the whole of the white workers in the British Commonwealth of Nations, is to be strongly condemned on moral, political, and economic grounds. This Conference is further of the opinion that it is essential in all tropical and sub-tropical Dependencies: (a) To safeguard the native's right to the land and to preserve to him the

1. Labour Party Annual Conference Report 1925, pp.228-36.

possibility of its use according to tribal and communal custom; (b) to supervise the recruitment and conditions of labour so as to prevent industrial slavery and the economic dislocation of the life of native communities; (c) To control the use of capital to prevent violations of the rights of native communities or the creation of social conditions leading to their social and economic demoralisation; and (d) To invite the League of Nations to elaborate a code for the protection of native rights and "appoint" an "Observer" to the governing body of each Dependency and Mandated Territory, whereby all such Dependencies and Mandated Territories of the British and other Governments may benefit from the impartial supervision of the League of Nations, pending full self-government."[1]

Seconding the resolution was Charles Roden Buxton, chairman of the A.C.I.Q. and a member of the I.L.P. He put the argument for reforming the empire, rather than abandoning it. The Labour party, declared Buxton, did not believe in Imperialism but in internationalism. However, this did not mean that the party was committed to immediate liquidation of the empire, even the Russiam communist government had not adopted the policy of evacuation and repudiation of its colonies. The fact of Empire had to be accepted in one form or another. The aim of Labour's policy was to prevent the capitalist exploitation which was going on in considerable portions of the British Empire. Self-government was no remedy because it was out of the question for many years to come.

However, C.J. Moody (Richmond Labour Party) did not accept this argument, and moved an amendment which declared that it was "contrary to the best interests of the working class of this country and the whole world to attempt to

1. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1925, pp.228-229.

cloak the imperial rapacity of British capitalism, expressing itself in the forcible exploitation and repression of hundreds of millions of coloured workers and peasants, by falsely describing the Empire as a 'Commonwealth of Nations'." His resolution stated that the Empire meant cheap raw materials and opportunities for investing capital for capitalists, while for the working class it meant low wages, competition and unemployment. It condemned all proposals for harnessing the Labour Movement of the country to capitalist brigandage by means of collaboration in imperialist schemes of Empire development and emigration which were plans for fastening the fetters of capitalist exploitation more firmly upon the workers. The purpose of socialism, which was the object of the Labour party, was not served by sending the masses away from the country by emigration schemes but by winning the country for the masses. The principle of self-determination should be applied in an unqualified manner throughout the Empire. The Labour party should assist in the formation and development of workers' and peasants' organisations, trade unions and political parties throughout the Empire, which would hold periodical congresses to work out the application of socialist programmes to the special conditions and the stage of struggle reached in the respective countries of the Empire. The evils of capitalist exploitation of the tropical and sub-tropical peoples as low grade sweated labour should be strongly fought. It was essential that in all the tropical and sub-tropical dependencies the 'native's rights' to lands and to self-government should be restored by according them complete independence. Industrial slavery and conscription in any form should be prevented by offering the 'native'

communities fraternal aid in their struggle for freedom and independence. A future Labour Government should be pledged to the policy of self-determination and also to providing material, economic and educational aid. It should institute a complete state monopoly of foreign trade and all transport should be cheapened by the nationalisation of shipping. The resolution concluded by declaring that the Conference should instruct the Executive Committee to establish the closest alliance between peasants and workers throughout the Empire, should take all possible steps to secure the release of political prisoners and to secure full political rights for the working masses and the speediest possible realisation of the principles of self-government and complete independence. The resolution was a declaration of opposition to the existence of the British Empire and recommended a policy of speedy abandonment. Moody thought if the workers were to improve their position the British Empire would have to be smashed. The seconder, Mr. W.T. Colyer (Holborn L.P.), stated that the Empire, by its very nature, must be a military machine for the purpose of forcing the will of the owners of the Empire upon the subject races to the detriment of the British working classes.

James Sexton M.P. (Transport and General Workers Union) did not think that capitalism could be so easily abolished. He believed that the first consideration of the Labour Movement should be to get the 'natives' out of the present 'slough of despond'. Jack Jones M.P. (National Union of General Workers) also thought that it was useless to go to people and say 'we want to wipe out all the past and start with a new Empire, self-determination right and left.' The Executive's resolution provided the opportunity of showing

that the Labour party had an Imperial policy for administering the Empire.

However, J.D. Mack (Central Leeds L.P.) supported the amendment. He thought that the Labour Government should have done something about the 200,000 political prisoners in India. There were a very large number of people in the I.L.P. who had very strong views on the subject of imperialism and thought that the palliatives that the official policy was offering were of no use and would only make the position worse.

Dr. Haden Guest M.P. summed up in support of the Executive's resolution. He believed that to take the point of view that the Empire should be smashed was one that might be consistent with Communist philosophy but would be very foolish for the Labour party to adopt. The alternative which the Labour party proposed to smashing the Empire was to socialise it. This was a much more constructive policy and the Executive in its resolution had laid the foundation of a great socialist policy which could be expanded year by year. It was perfectly obvious from the point of view of economic organisation that the best place for the Indian worker was as a constituent member of the Commonwealth. Some members of the Labour party did not appear to realise that many of the peoples on the equator were still cannibal tribes. The real keynote of Labour policy should be co-operation with other Labour governments and greater unity with Labour within the Commonwealth, thereby laying the foundation of a great Socialist advance which would be an advance into reality and not into Communist chimeras. The question was put to a vote - the resolution was carried and the amendment lost. Despite the strong anti-imperialist feeling in the party, which had been shown at the 1921 party conference, and, the 1925 trade union conference, when presented with a stark choice between abandoning or

reforming the empire, the party chose reform.

The 'Daily Herald' believed that the Conference had supported the right policy. Discussing the debate, it reported that it 'proved how very difficult it is to say anything about the Empire without talking nonsense. The mover and seconder of the resolutinn Mr. J.R. Clynes and Mr. Charles Buxton avoided this; some of the others did not. The choice offered was, as Dr. Haden Guest neatly put it, between smashing the Empire and Socialising it. How the smashers would proceed they did not explain. The Conference showed plainly that it hated Imperialism but had no intention of pouring the baby away with the bath water.'[1]

The I.L.P. paper, the 'New Leader', took a different line. Its editor, H.N. Brailsford, was not enthusiastic about the programme outlined by the party at the Conference. He thought that it lacked a driving purpose and was just a new brand of Imperialism in disguise. The idea that the workers of Britain should emigate to the colonies in order to cure employment at home was a cry of despair.[2]

The I.L.P. included many people who thought that the Empire should be abandoned as quickly as possible but it also included many of the members of the Labour party's A.C.I.Q. who believed that the Empire should be reformed rather than abandoned. C.R. Buxton, the chairman of the A.C.I.Q., published a pamphlet 'The Black Man's Rights'[3] under the auspices of the I.L.P., advocating policies similar to those he had helped to formulate for the Labour

1. 'Daily Herald', 1 October 1925.
2. 'New Leader', 25 September 1925.
3. C.R. Buxton, 'The Black Man's Rights' (I.L.P., 1925),

party. He also published 'The Exploitation of the Coloured Man', expanding the points for the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society.[1] These pamphlets were published as part of the plan to try to awaken the electorate to its colonial responsibilities. (Leys and Woolf wrote to him congratulating him on a 'first class pamphlet'.[2])

The I.L.P. also published a pamphlet more critical of the empire than Buxton's; 'The Crime of Empire' by C.A. Smith.[3] It stated that the essence of the empire was the subjugation of one people by another. The real thrust behind Imperialist expansion was simply the desire of certain groups of industrialists and financiers to secure profitable investments. Empires were motivated by greed and acquired by theft and murder. The aims of those who dictated imperialist policy were not disinterestedly patriotic but sordidly selfish. While in some cases the subject peoples had benefited materially from British rule, for the most part they had suffered many grievous hardships as a result of it. The possession of an empire meant 'that there is no point in time at which the earth does not in its diurnal rotation, present to the sun some example of greed of gold having developed into wanton aggression against a people with whom we have no quarrel, into unprovoked attack upon fellow human beings, guilty only of possessing something our capitalist coveted and of being militarily weaker than ourselves.'[4] This assessment was not accepted by all members of the I.L.P.

In March 1926 the I.L.P. published its considered policy

1. C.R. Buxton, 'The Exploitation of the Coloured Man' (A.S.A.P.S. 1925).
2. Woolf to Buxton, Leys to Buxton, 11 June 1925, Buxton Papers Box 5/3.
3. C.A. Smith, 'The Crime of Empire' (I.L.P. 1926)
4. ibid, p.15.

for the Empire which was to be submitted to the I.L.P. party conference in April. It was accepted at the Conference and became the official I.L.P. policy. 'Socialism and Empire'[1] was drafted by an Empire Policy Committee consisting of C.R. Buxton, Norman Leys, Leonard Woolf, W. MacGregor Ross, Harold Laski, Ben Riley M.P., T.P. Scriha, Rennie Smith M.P., James C. Welsh M.P. and the secretary was Ernest E. Hunter. Buxton, Leys, Woolf and Ross also belonged to the Labour party's A.C.I.Q., which meant that there were similarities between the policy of the I.L.P. and the Labour party, but the I.L.P. policy showed a greater sense of urgency than the Labour party's policy.

The main idea of the I.L.P.'s policy was that a 'Socialist Empire' involved a complete break with past traditions. Its policy should be based upon a recognition 'that the interests of the workers of the world of whatever race, colour or creed are one, and that war, imperialism and the exploitation of the native races are caused mainly by the greed of competing capitalist groups.'[2] This basic principle was laid down in the I.L.P. consitution. The I.L.P. would seek to prevent these evils by the establishment of a world organisation of free peoples, co-operating in the production and distribution of the world's goods. 'Socialist Empire' policy should aim at creating the conditions which would make the establishment of a world organisation of free peoples possible. With regard to the non-self-governing parts of the empire, the primary aim should be to introduce democratic institutions. Where self-government was not immediately practicable, the policy should be the public acknowledgment by Great Britain, as was

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1. 'Socialism and Empire' (I.L.P., 1926).
2. 'Socialism and Empire ' (I.L.P., 1926),p.3.

done in the case of India in 1917, that self-government in all imperial dependencies was Britain's aim. In order to prepare for that, there should be a programme of educational and legislative policy which would enable self-government to be achieved as quickly as possible. No scheme of empire organisation should have as its aim the injury of any other nation or be in any way prejudicial to the development of international socialism.

The I.L.P. Empire Policy Group recognised that in the Crown Colonies and Protectorates self-government was an ideal which could not be realised for some years. The only alternatives in the immediate future were paternal government by imperial agents or the rule of the resident minority. The former policy should be pursued until the indigenous peoples were ready for self-government. To achieve self-government two things would be required: first, a scheme that would give every child the opportunity of knowledge and, second, in the interim stage before complete self-government, a large measure of supervision by the agents of an all-inclusive League of Nations of the administration of the dependencies by the Western powers. To prepare for responsibility, genuine representation should be given to 'natives' on Legislative Councils in an increasing degree. It was important to prevent legislation in the interests of the settlers while the 'natives' did not have a voice corresponding to their numbers. This should be the task of the international supervisor. There should also be an international organisation for the control and distribution of raw materials and the principle of the 'open door' should be enforced. A code of 'native' rights for all colonies should be drawn up with particular attention given to land, labour and taxation. International Labour Legislation to

raise the working conditions of the coloured workers should be enforced and there should be liberty for the coloured workers to form trade unions. Control should be exercised by the Government over investments in the colonial areas and, where costly machinery and experts were required, the Government should supply the necessary capital and educate the Africans, through co-operation or other methods, in the use of it.

The pamphlet stated that education was of the utmost importance as it was only through education that the African would ever be able to control his own destiny. Primary education should be made accessible to every child; ideally, this should be provided by the state. The African should be educated in technical skills but this did not mean that commercial and literary education should be neglected.

In order to give effect to this policy, it was necessary that there should be international supervision. The Mandates Commission should be given full powers of inspection and inquiry, and a Commissioner should be accredited to each Mandated Territory to act as the League's ambassador. He should belong to a different state from that of the mandatory power and it would be his job to keep watch upon the work of the Mandatory power and independently to report on it to the League. (No person should be appointed to the colonial service dealing with indigenous peoples without an adequate training in ethnology and anthropology.)

The 1926 I.L.P. Conference was virtually unanimous on the resolution on Imperial policy,[1] which was based on the work of the Empire Policy Group. A.F. Fenner Brockway stated that neither the Labour and Socialist International nor the International Federation of Trade Unions would ever

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1. I.L.P. Conference Report, 1926.

become truly international until the coloured workers of Africa, Asia and elsewhere were included in the working class movement.[1]

The policy put forward by the I.L.P. was similar to that put forward by the Labour party in 'Labour and the Empire: Africa'. The I.L.P. pamphlet devoted more space to working out how a policy of international supervision would take effect. The importance of developing trade unions was also given more emphasis in the I.L.P. policy. The I.L.P. also put slightly more emphasis on 'socialism' but did not go into very great detail about what it meant by 'socialism'. Both party statements emphasised the paramount importance of education, but the I.L.P. placed more emphasis on ensuring that there was no 'colour bar' in education. The I.L.P. believed that the African should not be given a different education from that which was given to the white man. In this, the I.L.P. pamphlet reflected the views of Norman Leys. Another favourite idea of Leys', which was included in the I.L.P. pamphlet, was that the next Labour Colonial Secretary should publicly state that self-government was the aim in all Britain's colonies. The I.L.P. pamphlet gave the impression that the writers believed that progress should be made to give independence as soon as possible, whereas the Labour policy statement did not give the same impression of the need for urgent action.

The Labour party discussed Imperialism again at the 1926 Party Conference at Margate. Miss Freda Utley (London University L.P.) moved "that this conference declares that the Labour party (whether in office or opposition) shall do all in its power to help the native peoples to obtain control

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1. 'New Leader', 9 April 1926.

of their own land. It holds it to be essential that in all non-self-governing parts of the Empire we should:- (1) Restore the Natives' right to land. (2) See that they are educated for self-government. (3) Prevent industrial slavery and conscription in any form, and the consequent dislocation of the life of the Native community and of the workers of this country."[1]

In her speech, Miss Utley declared that the action needed to be taken by the Labour party could not be summarised in a brief resolution owing to the varying problems which had to be dealt with in the different parts of the Empire. The effect on the working class of Great Britain of the exploitation of the 'natives' was unemployment. The fact that capitalists employed 'native' labour at ridiculously low wages meant that, while they built their mills abroad, the industry at home would be in an ever-increasing state of depression. F. Kenyon (Brass and Metal Workers) thought that if the exploitation of the 'savage races' continued, it would lead to greater exploitation of the workers in Britain. After a short debate the resolution was agreed to.

A second, more extreme resolution was also put to the party conference. It was moved by John Gibbons (Wimbledon, Merton and Morden L.P.) and declared that "the Labour party conference believes that it is only possible to maintain the British Empire by the forcible domination and exploitation of hundreds of millions of coloured workers. It therefore sends greetings to our coloured brothers struggling to be free, and declares it is with them in their opposition to Imperialism and supports their demand for self-determination

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1. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1926, pp.252-3.

even to the point of seceding from the Empire."[1]

Mr. Gibbons thought that it was essential that the conference should realise that Great Britain maintained her hold over these people by force before they could in any way set out to help them. Joseph Southall (Edgbaston L.P.), seconding the resolution thought that there was no middle course: they either had to be full-blooded imperialists or give the whole thing up.

J.R. Clynes replied on behalf of the Executive. He hoped that conference would content itself with the London University resolution. This second motion, thought Clynes, was foolish and extravagant. Clynes believed that it was possible to maintain the British Empire - or, as he would call it, the British Commonwealth - without the forcible domination and exploitation of hundred of millions of native workers. The job of the party at the moment was to watch over the interests of their fellow subjects in all parts of the Empire. They had done that by parliamentary action and in other ways. Their policy had been declared at Liverpool the previous year. The party could not afford to throw away such popularity as it had got by passing unnecessarily provocative resolutions denouncing their own country. The issue was then avoided by moving the previous question, which was carried. The leadership of the party did not accept that the empire could not be reformed. Conference seemed willing to accept the policy of reform but, by passing motions, such as that proposed by Miss Utley, indicated that it expected more from a Labour Colonial Secretary than had been achieved by Thomas. Conference's anti-imperialism was further shown by passing a resolution by H.S. Redgrove

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1. ibid.

(Teachers' Labour League) which urged the Conference to condemn 'the imperialistic teaching in the schools, particularly with regard to Empire Day celebrations and the use of history and other textbooks with an anti-working class bias' and called on Labour teachers 'to take steps to prevent the further celebration of Empire Day and to investigate the school books in use with a view to eliminating those written from an anti-working class point of view.'[1]

By 1926, the Labour party had revised its policy pamphlet of 1920. The new pamphlet had been studied and approved by the National Executive Committee and the T.U.C. General Council. Colonial policy had also been discussed at the 1925 conference and the official policy, which was based on the advice of the A.C.I.Q., had been approved. However, both the T.U.C. and the Labour party conferences had made it clear that they disliked imperialism and expected a more positive policy of reform than Thomas had appeared to favour when he was at the Colonial Office. Thomas' arguments had been overwhelmingly voted down at the 1925 Trade Union Congress. However, the trade unions did not appear very interested in the problems of the African colonies. The 1925 motion had shown that trade union movement was strongly against imperialism and was concerned that cheap labour might provide competition for British workers, but the trade unions were not to show a concerted interest in the problems of the African colonies until the late 1930s when the threat of competition became more obvious as the economic development of the African colonies became more pronounced.

The I.L.P. had discussed colonial policy and worked out a policy which was based on the same principle as the

1. ibid.

Labour party's policy: the empire was to be reformed rather than abandoned. The only difference was that the I.L.P. pamphlet seemed to reflect Norman Leys' views and show a greater sense of urgency than the Labour party pamphlet, which was strongly influenced by Leonard Woolf's Fabian ideas of gradual reform.

Despite the acceptance of the A.C.I.Q.'s policy, there was a wide variety of opinion in the Labour party and the trade unions concerning the empire. Some, such as C.A. Smith, H. Pollitt, J. Gibbons, C.J. Moody and A. Purcell, still seemed to think that the best policy was one of abandonment: and discussions at T.U.C. and Labour party conferences seemed to indicate that there was some measure of support for this attitude among the rank-and-file, but never enough to defeat the official policy. Others, such as Thomas and Clynes, gave the impression that the empire was not in need of drastic reform and that a policy of a large measure of continuity with Conservative policy should be pursued. The Labour Commonwealth Group in parliament did not produce a clear policy for the empire but some of their members considered the idea of empire free trade. However, the Labour Party, as a whole, remained firmly committed to the idea of free trade. The A.C.I.Q.'s policy for Africa was based on the idea of free trade and international supervision of the African colonies. Even the A.C.I.Q. was not completely united. The committee was generally not very favourable to the idea of economic development in the African colonies, apart from Green, who emphasised the need for economic development to provide resources to increase the standard of living of the Africans. Wedgwood, however, seemed to think that the best policy was to ensure that the Africans all had enough land to live on

and then leave them alone and try and avoid the problems of industrialisation. Buxton and Woolf supported the policy of trusteeship but Leys was trying to emphasise the 'equal rights' policy instead of that of trusteeship. Leys and Wedgwood were also more sceptical of the policy of 'indirect rule', which most members of the A.C.I.Q. thought had some merit. The differences between the members of the party came out more clearly as the party tried to clarify its colonial policy in order to win the approval of the British Commonwealth Labour Conference and the Labour and Socialist International.

CHAPTER 5.

INTERNATIONAL APPROVAL

The British Commonwealth Labour Conference met in 1925 and a motion was proposed by George Lansbury which stated: "The Conference desires to obtain the views of the various Labour parties on the question whether it is desirable that the aim of Labour policy should be to develop the subject peoples so that they may ultimately be fitted to elect and control their own government!"[1] After discussion it was agreed to refer the resolution back because, as Ramsay MacDonald said, the only thing that the resolution did was to cast doubt as to 'whether these people were ready for self-government or not'.[2] The Conference agreed that the question was ill-framed and referred it back. However, a questionnaire was sent out to the Labour parties in the British Commonwealth for the next British Commonwealth Labour Conference.[3]

The questionnaire asked concerning subject peoples:

(1) Whether these peoples should be granted self-government immediately?

(2) If not, how to apply our principle of political self-determination to these peoples?

(3) How to prevent their economic exploitation, including the safeguards necessary to protect natives in the ownership and use of their land, and the measures to be adopted to prevent slave labour or forced or indentured labour?

(4) How to secure the surplus products for the consumption and use of other natives and maintain a satisfactory exchange of goods between them and the rest of the world?

(5) Where different races inhabit the same country, how all sections can live in peaceful existence and on terms of

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1. Report of the British Commonwealth Labour Conference, July 27 - August 1 1925, p.22. The British Commonwealth Labour Conference was a conference of the parties which represented Labour within the British Commonwealth.
2. ibid, p.23.
3. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1925 p.60.

equality and how the Labour Movement can assist to that end? (6) How the education of these people may be best promoted?

The A.C.I.Q. was given the task of finding the answers to these questions. Leonard Woolf wrote a memo on the questionnaire in January 1926.[1] He thought that Britain's different dependencies should be treated differently. The Africans were not in a position to govern themselves. In many places, for example Kenya, the grant of self-government would merely mean that the inhabitants would fall into the hands of the white settlers who would usurp all political power. The grant of self-government in this case would be disastrous. In answer to the second question, Woolf thought that the principle of self-determination could not be applied immediately. The only thing which could be done immediately was to do everything possible to prepare the peoples for self-government. This could only be done by preventing political power falling into the hands of minorities who would use it for their own political and economic ends. The central legislative and executive powers should remain completely in the hands of the Imperial Government - the Colonial Office which was responsible to the two Houses of Parliament. 'Responsible Government' should not be granted until it was certain that the government would be controlled by the African inhabitants. Education of the Africans should be undertaken in two ways - general and political. Political education should be achieved by training the inhabitants in local self-government. The aim should be the gradual extension of the area and powers of these self-governing areas. The Labour party's programme was to maintain Colonial Office control at the centre, while trying to develop local African self-

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 22, January 1926.

government with the eventual aim of letting the Africans take over the central government. However no time scale was given by Woolf.

Harry Snell dealt specifically with education in a memo that he wrote in answer to question six.[1] He thought that the Labour party's education policy for the Africans need not be all that different from that described in the Government's White Paper 'Education Policy in British Tropical Africa.'[2] Snell believed that the essentials of a sound education policy should include the development of a self-reliant character, knowledge of personal health and social hygiene, a recognition of the importance of scientific agriculture, including the breeding and care of live stock, industrial skill, improvement of family life, knowledge of the effect of alcohol and drugs upon the body and the facility for healthy recreation 'such as would provide an alternative to the moonlight revels and physical excesses to which native peoples sometimes resort.' Snell's policy was paternalistic and did not put as much emphasis on training Africans for self-government as others such as Leys and the I.L.P. pamphlet did.

Snell put forward his thoughts on 'British Labour and Kenya' in an article in the 'New Leader'.[3] He believed that the British Labour Movement's hands were clean over Kenya; it had never ceased to demand generous treatment for the humblest black 'native'. He thought that the Labour attitude towards backward peoples in Africa or elsewhere should be based upon a recognition of the essential

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1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 23, January 1926.
2. Cmd. 2374, March 1925.
3. 'New Leader', 29 October 1926, p.5.

manhood of the 'native'. The British Labour Movement could never consent to erect a barrier against the development of lowly people and say to them 'You may do manual work on white men's farms, take indentured service in his mines, and do the menial duties of his household, but beyond that you shall not go.' The black man, like men of other races, must be free to give, or to withhold his labour as other men are, and he must have freedom to undertake whatever duties his capacities enable him to perform. If he can do work of a higher kind than his father did, he ought to be free to do thatwork and he ought never to consent to be used as a semi-intelligent tool for the benefit of more highly organised white communities. Snell's attitude to the Africans was fatherly and condescending.

H.S.L. Polak wrote a memo for the A.C.I.Q. dealing with the relations of different races in the same country in answer to question five.[1] He thought that it was essential that in the territories with populations of various peoples the elective principle should be eliminated and that of nomination from a panel substituted. He believed that this would have prevented many of the lamentable results which had culminated in the fierce controversies in Kenya. Where a franchise was adopted, it was essential that it should be exercised in general mixed electorates and upon a common electoral roll. Communal franchises were divisive. No man should be excluded from office, place, occupation or activity by virtue of his race or colour. In order to give effect to its colonial policy, Polak thought that the Labour party should hold Commonwealth Conferences, set up imperial committees within the P.L.P., study the methods applied by

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 24, January 1926.

foreign governments and the literature published by the I.L.O. and the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, affiliate wherever possible to League of Nations unions, issue simple leaflets and pamphlets to local Labour parties and trade unions, encourage lectures, require parliamentary candidates to become conversant with the policy andrefer to it during election campaigns, have contributions from qualified writers in the party and general press, promote the principles underlying policy in adult schools, W.E.A. and women's organisations, collaborate with all societies or organisations having like objects and conduct frequent visits to the countries to which the policy is applied and report on progress. This long list indicates that the A.C.I.Q. were concerned at the ignorance of the subject within the Labour party and among the public in general.

J.F.N. Green wrote a memo concerning production and trade with the colonies.[1] He thought that if the 'native' knew that he was secure in the possession of his land, it would be impossible to induce him to labour on estates which had been appropriated by capitalists except on terms which were advantageous for the 'native'. The usual form of compulsion used by the whites was the hut or poll tax which forced those who had no market for their goods - or in some cases men of military age precluded by tribal custom from field labour - to travel in search of employment by which to earn the money to pay the taxes on themselves and their relatives. All systems of driving the 'natives' to work for the capitalists should be abolished and tribal co-operatives should be encouraged. To enable Africans to run co-operatives they should be educated in agriculture, industry, medicine and commerce. They should also

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1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 25, January 1926.

participate in local government to train them for eventual self-government. However, since foreign exploitation of some sort was inevitable it was important to insist on conditions; resources should only be released for a maximum of ten years, adequate wages should be paid to the 'natives', safeguards for life and health should be adopted at the place of work, the 'native' workers should not be separated from their families and there should be inspectors and representative bodies for the 'natives' which would eventually become trade unions.

Charles Roden Buxton wrote a memo on the questions of land, labour and taxation,[1] which stated that exploitation had taken place on such a vast scale that it would be difficult to diminish it, let alone abolish it. The aim of Labour's policy should be to give the 'native' the choice of working for wages or not. In order to do this there should be a code of 'native' rights. Land should be held by the African communities in East Africa as it was in West Africa. Compulsory wage labour should be prohibited, trade unions encouraged, I.L.O. legislation applied and all capital investments should be subject to some degree of government control. Taxation should not be used as an instrument to force the 'natives' to work but should provide the revenue for 'native' services. The white population should be made to bear its fair share of taxes. Finally, Buxton thought that the Mandate system should be extended to all parts of the British Empire which were inhabited by weaker races. These points had been included in the Labour party policy statement 'Labour and the Empire: Africa.'.

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1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 26, January 1926.

All these memos on the questions posed for the British Commonwealth Labour Conference were compiled into a final draft answering all the questions from the point of view of the British Labour party.[1] The document provided a summary of the Labour party's colonial policy towards Africa. The main points were that independence could not be granted in Africa immediately for the Africans were unprepared. The policy should be one of preparing the Africans for self-government by general education, local self-government and preventing political power falling into the hands of the white settler minorities. The exploitation of the Africans should stop, the tribes should hold the land and the Africans should not be forced to work but given the choice of working for the white settlers or capitalists or working on their own land for themselves.

These memos indicate that most of the Labour party's experts did have a sense of superiority towards the Africans. They also failed to confront the complex question of economic development in any detail. There was no clear exposition of the steps which would be necessary before majority rule could result in Africa. The party's attitude to the policy of 'indirect rule' was also ambiguous, Leonard Woolf appearing to support it, and, Leys opposing it. The policy concerning the franchise was also uncertain; Wedgwood and Leys thought that an equal franchise with an educational test on the common roll should be adopted everywhere. However, Polak, although favouring the common roll, if there were elections, thought that it was better to secure representation by nominated panels, rather than by election. He argued that in Kenya the elective principle should be eliminated in favour of nominated panels. The

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1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 27, February 1926.

education policy was also uncertain: Snell favoured a paternalist education which would enable the African to work and look after himself more efficiently, but Leys emphasised that higher education was necessary to train an educated elite which would be able to take over from the British Colonial administration when independence came.

The completed questionnaire was sent by the A.C.I.Q. to the N.E.C. which considered it at the meeting on 28 April 1928[1] and it was decided to appoint a sub-committee of MacDonald M.P., J.H. Thomas M.P., G. Lansbury M.P., and Arthur Henderson M.P. to examine the draft reply and report their approval or otherwise to the Committee. It was later decided to report to the Joint Committee of the N.E.C. and the General Council of the TU.C.[2] The policy was approved as the pamphlet on Africa had been approved. The leadership seemed to have nothing to add to the A.C.I.Q.'s policy, despite its ambiguities. At a meeting of the N.E.C. and the General Council on 29 July 1926 it was suggested that the International Labour and Socialist Conference should be held in the same year as the British Commonwealth Labour Conference. This suggestion was approved and the two conferences were scheduled for 1928.[3]

E.F. Wise, the I.L.P. leader, wrote an article discussing the 'Socialist Commonwealth of Nations'.[4] This stated that the impending Imperial Conference of the trade unions and Labour parties of the British Commonwealth made it urgent for the party to turn it s mind towards

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1. N.E.C. Minutes 28 April 1928.
2. Joint Meeting of N.E.C. and General Council Minutes, 29 July 1926.
3. Joint Meeting Minutes, 29 July 1926.
4. 'New Leader' 5 November 1926.

these problems. Labour policy should clearly not be to smash the Empire but to use it, as far as was possible, as a great instrument of democratic socialism. It was obvious that the old type of imperialism was ill at ease by the virtual abandonment of imperial preference. The new conception of empire should emphasise co-operation on a world wide scale and this would lead to increased consumption and prosperity. The people of Britain should work with the peoples of the empire to achieve a better world. In order to do this, the I.L.P., initially, gave support to an organisation of the colonial peoples, the League Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism.[1] However, the British Labour party decided that it already possessed machinery for dealing with these problems in the Labour and Socialist International and so ignored the League Against Imperialism. The I.L.P. sent Fenner Brockway to the conference called by the League Against Imperialism in February 1927. He thought that the conference was 'extraordinarily significant in drawing together the subject peoples of every race and colour to take common action against imperialism.'[2] The Conference was criticised by the L.S.I. on the grounds that it was of Communist origin. However, the I.L.P. thought that it was 'assertively anti-communist' and it would be 'a great mistake for Socialists to boycott a development of such enormous potentialities as the collaboration of the subject peoples of the world against their oppressors.'[3]

Fenner Brockway wrote enthusiastic articles about the Conference in the 'New Leader'.[4] He thought that the

1. International Committee of N.E.C. Minutes, 3 February 1927.
2. I.L.P. Conference Report, 1927, p.10.
3. ibid.
4. 'New Leader', 26 August 1927, p.5.

League against Imperialism might be an important bridge to reunite the International Socialist Movement. It aimed at uniting all sincere anti-imperialists in Europe with the rising Liberation Movement of the Subject races of the world. Brockway thought that it would be 'suicidal if socialists refrained from association with this movement, even if it had been initiated by Communists'. It had done what the Socialist international had failed to do - seriously begun the task of uniting the proletarian movements among the coloured races. It would be short-sighted and stupid for the L.S.I. to permit the coloured races to gain the impression that the Communists were their only friends.

Brockway had to report, however, in another article[1] that the Executive of the L.S.I. had failed to take his advice. W. Gillies, for the Labour party, insisted that the League was another Communist manoeuvre. The L.S.I. Executive adopted a resolution expressing support for the coloured workers in their struggle and declaring a desire for close contacts but decided against joining the League.

This decision by the L.S.I. meant that affiliated bodies could not join the L.A.I. The National Administrative Council of the I.L.P . accepted that decision but held that it was within the right of individual members of the National Administrative Council to participate actively in the League. The N.A.C. was of the opinion that the work of the League in securing united efforts against imperialism throughout the world was of the greatest importance and regretted that the L.S.I. stood apart from it.[2]

The third British Commonwealth Labour Conference was held between 2 - 6 July 1928. However, the question of the

1. 'New Leader', 16 September 1927, p.7.
2. I.L.P. Conference Report, 1928, p.6.

colonies and the subject peoples was not discussed.[1] The Conference ended in some disarray owing to the withdrawal of the Indian delegation in protest against the fact that two members of the Labour party were serving on the Simon Commission. The answers to the Questionnaire on subject peoples were circulated.

Although the British Commonwealth Labour Conference did not discuss the question of subject peoples, the Labour and Socialist International, which met the same year, did. In 1926 the Executive Committee of the L.S.I. appointed a commission to report on the colonial problem to the Congress.[2] This Commission drew up a questionnaire which was sent to the various Labour parties. It dealt with many problems concerning the colonies and India. The A.C.I.Q. prepared answers for the British Labour party as it had done for the British Commonwealth Labour Conference.[3] The Labour party's reply to the questionnaire integrated the answers prepared for the B.C.L.C. which had been approved by the T.U.C. and the Labour party.[4] All the replies from the different socialist parties were published together with a draft resolution of the Colonial Commission under the title 'The Colonial Problem'.[5] Under the heading 'The policy of the Labour party', it was stated that 'British Labour has devoted a steadily increasing amount of attention to the problem of native land and labour during recent years.' Then a list of, and quotations from, various Labour party statements was given, including the 'Memo on

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1. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1928, Appendix VI, p.303
2. ibid., Appendix VIII
3. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 12 October 1927.
4. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1928,p.325.
5. 'The Colonial Problem' (The Labour Party, 1928)

War Aims' (1918), the resolutions of the 1925 and 1926 Conferences, and the 1920 and 1926 pamphlets.[1] The answers to the questionnaire of the B.C.L.C. were also printed.[2]

At the L.S.I. Conference, the Colonial Commission, which considered the various statements by the socialist parties, drafted a resolution on the colonies which was passed by the Labour and Socialist Conference. The British delegates who served on the Colonial Commission were Lansbury, Olivier, Snell, Paton, Ammon and Gillies.[3] (John Paton of the I.L.P. was only a supplementary delegate who concentrated on India.) The Labour Party had sent a strong delegation, numbering 80, to the conference of 600 and secured full representation on the Commissions. The I.L.P. was handicapped because the Labour party insisted that the full British delegation on certain of the Commissions should be Labour party delegates.[4]

The policy passed bythe L.S.I. stated that colonial policy had been one of the means of capitalist expansion throughout the world. Socialism was opposed to the very principle of foreign domination of colonial races and considered the abolition of the colonial system as a preliminary condition for any international commonwealth. For colonies which fulfilled the 'basic conditions of modern independent civilisation' it called for complete liberation from the foreign yoke; for the other colonial peoples who had not yet reached this standard, it called for safeguards against exploitation and oppression and

1. ibid, p.23
2. ibid., pp.72-101
3. I.L.P. Conference Report 1929,p.15
4. I.L.P. Conference Report, 1929, pp.14-15.

insisted upon their systematic education with a view to independence and concurrently an extension of self-government until they attained the right of full self-government. In more detail, the resolution demanded that the land not already appropriated by the Europeans should be recognised as the inalienable property of the 'native' community, every 'native' family should have sufficient land for its support, no taxes should be imposed except for the administration of public services which directly benefited the Africans, no taxes should be permitted which a 'native' could not pay without leaving home to work for the capitalist, all forced or indentured labour and taxation to force labour should be abolished, all labour contracts should be made according to models established by the Government and made public. Labour contracts should be made before a magistrate, a breach being remedied by civil process, all penal clauses being abolished. Contracts should be valid for no longer than a year. Recruitment and conditions of labour should be regulated and inspected, racial discrimination in industry should be abolished and a full measure of protective legislation should be enacted, especially in the interests of women and children. Foreign capitalists and planters should contribute a portion of their profits for 'native' welfare and education, and wherever possible, natural resources should be exploited by state enterprises.

The Government should give assistance to 'native' agriculture and encourage the establishment of Consumers' Co-operation among the 'natives'. The statement also demanded that the system of education should aim at preparing the 'natives' for the tasks of modern life - political, economic and social. The forms of this education

should be adapted to the general cultural level of each colonial territory and should be provided out of public funds.

Where Councils of Government existed they should be fully representative in due proportion of 'native' as well as European interests, with continued extension of popular control by the 'native' inhabitants. Wherever electoral institutions existed, the franchise should be general and equal and the electoral roll a common one with mixed electorates; there should be no privileged franchises. Under the heading 'General Principles' the document declared that the principle of trusteeship under the League of Nations could not be arbitrarily restricted to particular territories but should be extended to cover the whole of Africa and similar colonies of primitive culture elsewhere.[1]

Lord Olivier, one of the Labour party delegates on the Colonial Commission, thought that the policy was 'moderate in its language and incontestable in its substance.' He thought that the document was the 'European workers' charter for coloured labour.[2] The L.S.I., as the I.L.P. pointed out, was almost exclusively a European body. The I.L.P. wanted an all inclusive world international, but the difficulties of its realisation were great.[3]

The Labour party also produced another statement which included sections dealing with the colonies in 1928. This was the party's policy statement 'Labour and the Nation'. It was written by R.H. Tawney.[4] Concerning the 'Protection

1. 'The Colonial Problem' Texts of Resolutions adopted by the L.S.I. Congress, Labour Party Annual Conference Report 1928, Appendix IX, pp.335-8.
2. Lord Olivier, 'White Capital and Coloured Labour' (London, 1928) p.320
3. I.L.P. Conference Report 1929, p.15.
4. MacDonald wrote an early draft which was redrafted by Tawney. Marquand writes 'the style was unmistakably Tawney's: the conception was unmistakably MacDonald's.' op.cit.p.479.

of Indigenous Peoples'[1] it stated that:- "The Labour party views with grave concern the appalling evils produced by capitalist exploitation in certain tropical and sub-tropical parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It holds that the welfare of the indigenous races, their economic prosperity, and their advancement in culture and civilisation, must be the primary aim of colonial administration, to which all other objects must be rigorously subordinated. It notes with satisfaction that where that principle has been observed, primitive peoples have achieved, in a comparatively short space of time, results which decisively disprove the statement that they are incapable of social progress. It is determined that the fullest possible opportunities of similar progress shall be brought within their reach in all regions for whose government Great Britain is responsible".

"A Labour Government, therefore, will make no compromise with policies which aim at accelerating the economic development of backward areas by methods which undermine the independence, the social institutions and the morals of their inhabitants, and which thus are injurious both to them, and, ultimately, to the working classes of Europe. It will useevery means in its power to protect them in the occupation and enjoyment of their land, to prevent absolutely forced labour, whatever form it may assume, and to ensure that contracts between native workers and European employers are entered upon voluntarily and not under duress, that such contracts are subject to the approval of a public authority, and that they embody terms securing to the workers equitable conditions of life and employment. It will encourage the development of

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1. 'Labour and the Nation' (The Labour Party,1928)

services concerned with health and education. Its policy will be based upon the firm conviction that all dependencies of the Crown ought, as soon as possible, to become self-governing States. It will take steps, therefore, to transfer to the inhabitants of these countries, without distinction of race or colour, such measure of political responsibility as they are capable of exercising, while imperial responsibility for their government will be maintained during the period preceding the establishment of democratic institutions. It will instruct the Governments of these countries to extend to their inhabitants such rights as may already, as a result either of legislative or administrative measures, have been acquired by Europeans, and to make it their chief aim, by education and otherwise, to prepare the whole body of their inhabitants for self-government. It will co-operate cordially with the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, and will make every effort to strengthen and extend its authority."[1]

Norman Leys discussed this statement in an article in the 'New Leader'.[2] He thought that the passage was widely different from the passage in the L.S.I. document 'The Colonial Problem'. He dedared that the party had no right to profess one set of intentions to the Socialists of the world and another to the British electorate. The L.S.I. policy avowed by the party in Brussels was based upon the dogma that in every country the common people were rightfully sovereign and it was the chief duty of the colonial powers to do everything they possibly could to prepare the common people for the exercise of sovereign authority. On the other hand, the draft electoral programme, while it

1. 'Labour and the Nation' (Revised edition,1928),pp.48-49.
2. 'New Leader', 21 September 1928,p11.

deplored the evils that had resulted from imperialism, assumed the indefinite perpetuation of a state of tutelage and the inferiority of status which was the cause of these evils. Leys thought that the programme showed no sense of urgency but, on the other hand, he believed that the policy of the League Against Imperialism, which called for immediate self-government in every Dependency, was equally wrong. Leys felt that no honest man who knew the facts believed that the policy of immediate self-government in every Dependency was possible. The two policies were equally dishonest, that which would profess to render imperialism innocuous by safeguards, and that which would have the victims of imperialism convert themselves overnight into free and independent societies. Leys believed that no machine-gun would ever again be fired against Africans if the Colonial Secretary in the next Labour Government directed the Governors of the African Dependencies to make a public announcement to their inhabitants that self-government is theirs for the asking, and that every possible help will be given them to make them ready for its responsibilities. The bare announcement, thought Leys, would be enough. Once made, the Africans themselves would see to the rest. Leys was trying to inject a sense of urgency into the Labour party's colonial policy but most members of the party thought that the colonial problem was of no immediate importance.

The Labour Party Conference held at Birmingham in 1928 discussed the policy statement 'Labour and the Nation'[1] for three days but the passage on colonial policy was one of those not discussed proving that the party did not consider it vital.

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1. Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1928.

Jimmy Maxton, like Leys, thought that the section on colonial policy was not socialist enough and wrote an open letter to the members of the conference, criticising the sections 'which pledge the Labour party to maintain the Imperialist system and actually make it easier, by the changes proposed for capitalism to continue the exploitation of Colonial countries.'[1] However, Maxton, unlike Leys, did not support the L.S.I. resolution on 'The Colonial Problem'. A major part of his letter was concerned with attacking the L.S.I. resolution which the Labour party had supported. Maxton thought that the 'League Against Imperialism, which had been founded in Brussels in 1927, provided for the first time an organisation through which the workers of the oppressed and oppressing nations can jointly carry on the struggle for freedom.' The fact that Maxton wrote his criticisms from the point of view of the League Against Imperialism, a communist organisation, made many delegates ignore the criticisms and protest against Maxton's use of the Communist platform. However, Maxton was soon to be expelled from the League, ostensibly because he was lazy but mainly on ideological grounds because he was not a communist.[2] The 'New Leader' thought that the expulsion was the final proof of the impossibility of working with Communists.[3] The Labour party was firmly against the policy of working with communists. Its actions in avoiding the L.A.I. seemed vindicated when Maxton was expelled.

The I.L.P. did discuss colonial policy at its 1929 Conference at Carlisle, when R. Bridgeman presented a

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1. 'The Times', 3 October 1928.
2. Interview with Lord Brockway, 24 July 1973.
3. 'New Leader', 27 September 1929, p.3.

resolution, stating that the I.L.P. should dissociate itself from the policy of the Labour and Socialist International since, he thought, the L.S.I. report excluded the possibility of certain territories ever having self-government. (This was not the opinion of Norman Leys). John Paton, the I.L.P. representative on the L.S.I. Commission, replied that it was absurd to ask parties to dissociate themselves from the L.S.I. because they disagreed with certain small parts of policy. He pointed out that in some colonies there were not the conditions for self-government and the fact had to be faced that if the Imperial Government were withdrawn in Kenya the 'natives' would be at the mercy of the white settlers. However bad Imperial Government was, government by the minority white settlers would be much worse. On a show of hands, Bridgeman's resolution was lost.[1]

Fenner Brockway also moved a motion on Imperialism at the 1929 I.L.P. Conference which stated that a condition of control of subject peoples in Colonial Territories under the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations should be the adoption of a charter of labour for subject peoples prepared by the League of Nations. The resolution was carried.[2] (The League of Natinns had passed an Anti-Slavery Convention at the 1926 Assembly. At the time, John Harris of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society wrote that if it could be carried out and loyally applied in the letter and the spirit, it would secure a greater advance than anything attempted since the abolition of commercialised slavery.[3])

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1. 'New Leader', 5 April 1929, p.12.
2. 'New Leader', 12 April 1929, p.12.
3. 'New Statesman', 2 October 1926, p.698.

The Labour party had decided in 'Labour and the Nation' to prepare the African people for eventual self-government by education and extending equal rights to all people in the colonies. However, there was no clear indication of any timescale. There was certainly no intention of giving self-government in the near future. Norman Leys thought that there should be a more definite statement that the Africans could have self-government when they wanted it. Some in the I.L.P., such as J. Maxton and Bridgeman, thought that self-government should be given sooner rather than later, if not immediately. However, this point of view never gained ascendancy in the Labour party as a whole.

The main area of disagreement between the parties in Parliament on colonial policy concerned Kenya and the relationship between the white settlers and the black Africans. The Conservatives, following the ideas of the East African Commission, were trying to follow a policy of dual development for the white and black communities. Leopold Amery put this point of view in the House of Commons in 1929. "The only right view often summarised as "the dual policy" was the belief that there was room in those countries for white men and black men to live side by side and that, although there were grave dangers involved in the presence side by side of the native populations and of a race so immensely superior in strength and ability, yet with reasonable safeguards those dangers could be removed. During the initial period it was essential that control should remain in the House and not be entrusted to a mere handful of immigrant settlers who, naturally, in contact with the urgent problems of the pioneer, were apt

to take a short-sighted view...(But) Nothing would be more disastrous than for Parliament to regard themselves as champions of the black man and of no other interest and, on the other hand, that the white settler should look upon Parliament as a hostile body, incapable of realising the actual needs of the local situation, and, by the reaction of opposition, should concentrate on a bitter, narrow and unfair attitude towards the native population."[1]

The Labour party felt that, as the 1923 White Paper had stated, the interests of the Africans should be paramount. It feared that the 'dual policy' was an excuse for white development at the expense of the Africans. Norman Leys wrote an article in the 'New Leader',[2] in which he stated that the 'Dual policy' was being prevented from working because the Government had given about half of the best land to fewer that 2000 Europeans and then had done everything in its power to get the Africans to cultivate it for the profit of the new owners. The Labour party should insist that the Government and its agents in Kenya should be forbidden to use any means of inducing any African to leave home to work for wages rather than support himself and his family by working in his own fields. Leys thought that many Conservatives in Parliament would support this demand.

The East African Loans Bill came before Parliament in 1926. This provided for loans to countries in East Africa in order to forward economic development, particularly the development of railways. The A.C.I.Q. thought that the general policy of the Bill should be supported only if certain conditions were fulfilled.[3] Concerning Kenya, the

1. 219 H.C.Debs.,5s.,cols.2704-2706, 13 July 1928.
2. 'New Leader', 3 December 1926, p.18.
3. A.C.I.Q. Memo No.29, May 1926.

A.C.I.Q. thought that there should be no loan unless specific abuses were removed, a percentage should be laid down for the medical, sanitary, educational and veterinary services and certain general conditions should be observed. There should be no forced labour on construction work, a careful account should be taken of the adequacy of the labour supply, the money should not be given mainly for assisting white settlers, and all schemes of expenditure should be approved by Parliament. The A.C.I.Q. thought that only expenditure on railways in densely populated areas, harbour facilities, medical and veterinary services, education, infant welfare, sanitation and the building of an agricultural college could be justified.[1] The memos were circulated to the parliamentary party.[2]

The East African Loans Bill was debated in Parliament on 21 July 1926.[3] William Graham, one of the Labour party's financial experts, stated that the Labour party was not hostile to schemes of development but more information was needed. Harry Snell put some of the A.C.I.Q.'s points and said that the final attitude of the Labour party would depend upon whether the 'native' was going to share in the benefits which the loan sought to confer. The Labour party wanted to be sure that the African was not going to be made a wage-slave in his own country.

When the money resolution for the Bill was presented in the House of Commons on 1 December 1926, the Labour party moved that Kenya be excluded from the benefits of the loan.[4] Hugh Dalton said that Kenya should be excluded because of its policy of forced labour which was put into

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 29A, June 1926.
2. N.E.C. Minutes, 23 June 1926.
3. 198 H.C.Debs.,5s.,cols.1321-1366, 21 July 1926.
4. 200 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols.,1271-1334, 1 December 1926.

operation for the benefit of the white settlers. He agreed with Lord Delamere who had stated that he wanted to see Kenya excluded from the loan so that it could work out its own future free of Treasury control. The Labour party attached great importance to 'native' welfare and they suspected that too much of the grant was going to the white planters.

Baker, the Labour M.P. for Bristol East, wanted to make sure that as a result of the loan no labour would be forced on to public works and no labour would be forced to work on behalf of a public authority when it was urgently needed for the development of holdings which were held by the 'natives' themselves. W. Graham said that the Labour party was generally in favour of the proposals for the loans but it was worried about the financial policies adopted in the territories, particularly in Kenya.[1]

The House went into the Committee stage of the Palestine and East African Loans (Guarantee) Bill on 9 December 1926. Dalton again moved that Kenya be excluded from the loan.[2] He stated that the Labour party was not hostile to sound and equitable investments under British guarantee but it was hostile to the labour and land legislation in Kenya and still more to the ordinances that had been adopted for promoting the flow of labour from the native reserves on to the estates of the white planters. It seemed that the 'native' was being pressed by a number of discreditable devices to work on the estates of the white planter. The 'native' was forbidden to grow the most profitable source of coffee plant in his reserves. Another ordinance had laid down that breaches of contract between 'native'

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1. 200 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 1282-1284, 1 December 1926.
2. ibid., cols.2327-2332, 9 December 1926.

employees and white employers was a criminal offence punishable by two months imprisonment or a fine amounting to seven months wages. These contracts had recently been extended to children of 12 years of age. The Labour party, said Dalton, was not at all satisfied with the system of taxation and public finance in Kenya.

W. Baker, a trade union M.P., seconded the amendment. He said that the influence of the Government in Kenya had recently been thrown very heavily on the side of the white settlers instead of holding the balance between the settlers and the 'natives'.[1] Rennie Smith, the Labour M.P. for Penistone, thought that the situation in Kenya was the key one for the European population in East Africa. If things went badly there, they were bound to go badly for the 'natives' throughout therest of Africa. The Committee should be given information as to the conditions of labour which would govern the employment of 'natives' under the loan schemes.[2] Colonel Wedgwood pointed out that Kenya was occupied by settlers of a very high aristocratic caste and therefore criticism of the colony was not welcomed by the establishment in England. Wedgwood thought that the 'native' of Kenya should be allowed to do as he liked, whether he worked on his own land or elsewhere. It was not the duty of the state to make a man work if he did not want to. The Colonial Secretary was being beaten in Kenya by a feudal aristocracy which repeatedly threatened to secede.[3]

Ormsby-Gore, the Conservative Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, said that to keep Kenya out of participation in the proposed loans would not do the slightest harm to the

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1. 200 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols. 2332-2333, 9 December 1926.
2. ibid., 2333-2336, 9 December 1926.
3. ibid., 2337-2340, 9 December 1926.

gentlemen in Kenya to whom the Labour members objected, but would do great harm to the 'natives' for whom they were so greatly concerned. The objection of the Labour party to the inclusion of Kenya in the loan scheme was almost entirely due to the existence of Lord Delamere in the country. This was greeted with shouts of 'No' by the Labour members. Ormsby-Gore concluded by saying that to imagine that the white settlers of Kenya were slave-drivers was really ridiculous. Government supporters were tired of being perpetually lectured by Labour members on the subject of Kenya.[1]

In reply, Morgan Jones said that Kenya had become the acid test of Britain's colonial policy for the Labour party. The Duke of Devonshire had declared in 1923 that 'native' interests in East Africa should be paramount but this declaration had been departed from. The Labour party had no particular objection to Lord Delamere but he represented a certain type of mind. Ormsby-Gore could not deny that Lord Delamere and his friends were in possession of land from which the Masai had been thrown out. The Labour party knew that Lord Delamere was anxious to get up a movement for self-government so that discussion of Kenyan affairs would be removed from the House of Commons and the criticism of the Labour party. Morgan Jones wondered whether it was fair that the proportion of taxation on the 'native', having regard to his earning capacity, was much greater than that borne by the white settlers.[2]

Mr. Gillett said that the Labour party had no animus against the white settlers; their policy was founded on disagreement with the policy favoured by these settlers.[3]

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1. 200 H.C.Deb.,5s., cols. 2340-2344, 9 December 1926.
2. ibid., cols. 2344-2351
3. ibid., cols. 2351-2353

Tom Johnston also declared that the Labour party was not against the development of Kenya by British settlers. What they did say was that the way to disrupt the Empire and create misery and oppression was to follow Lord Delamere's policy.[1] The way to bring prosperity to the African Empire was to follow the policy adopted in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. Wedgwood pointed out that, although Ceylon contained a greater number of planters than Kenya, the Labour party did not criticise them because their methods did not require criticism from humane persons.[2]

The Labour party's amendment was negatived and Kenya was included in the loan. The debate showed the depth of Labour party feeling over Kenya and the growing irritation of the Conservatives at the Labour party's attacks on the policy of the white settlers in Kenya, particularly Lord Delamere.[3] The Labour party was not opposed on principle to colonial development but it wanted to make sure that the development would benefit the African and that it was not speculative development to make profits for white capitalists. The party was also anxious to ensure that the Africans were not forced to work for the white man against their will. It wanted the African to have the choice of either working for wages or working for himself on his own plot of land.

During the 1920s the Labour party maintained an ambiguous attitude towards colonial development. It was

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1. 200 H.C.Deb.,5s., cols. 2357-2359, 9 December 1926.
2. ibid., cols. 2359-2360
3. Lord Delamere's attitude was shown in a conversation with M. Perham when he said 'What has the Negro ever done anywhere? Other races, when you strike contact, respond and progress...Look at this country! Everything is done for them - what do they do for themselves?' M. Perham East African Journey (London,1976)pp.138-9.

not against it but neither was it definitely in favour of it. There were a number of factors which made the party wary of industrial development in the African colonies. As has been pointed out, the trade unions feared that industrial development would lead to competition from low-wage labour. There was also the feeling that, if resources were available for investment, it was better to use them at home to reduce unemployment and improve the position of the British workers. It was felt, by some, that Britain should sort out her domestic difficulties before worrying about Africa. 'Home First' wrote to Buxton that he should stop worrying about Africa and look at the problems of England.[1] Another factor was that some Labour M.P.s and African experts, particularly Josiah Wedgwood and E.D. Morel, when he was alive, felt that the process of industrialisation and development might lead to greater hardship and suffering for the Africans. They feared that industrialisation would break up the African way of life and replace it by industrial squalor. Wedgwood's solution was to give the Africans enough land to make a living and then leave them alone. The humanitarian lobby and the experts of the A.C.I.Q. put the emphasis on protecting the Africans from exploitation by white settlers. They were suspicious that if development was controlled by white settlers it would be to the detriment of the Africans. The A.C.I.Q. was primarily concerned with the social welfare of the Africans and not with industrial development. Leys put the emphasis on securing political rather than economic development. The A.C.I.Q.'s policy emphasised the need to provide the Africans with land and education so that they would eventually be able to gain political control.

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1. Brighouse and Elland Echo, 24 December 1930.

The A.C.I.Q. assumed that if Africans were given the land and assisted to develop the resources of the land, agricultural production would improve as in West Africa. The experts were against development by European syndicates or settlers through 'hired' or forced African labour. The Labour party put the emphasis on the development of African agriculture. The members of the A.C.I.Q. apart from Green, were not convinced of the value of railway and mining development. The party took little positive interest in the problems of industrial development in the 1920s. The only group which did show some interest was the Labour Commonwealth Group, but they were mainly concerned with developing trade with the countries of the empire, particularly, the Dominions, rather than advocating the industrial development of the African colonies. The Labour Commonwealth Group never put forward a coherent policy for colonial trade or the colonies. It wasdivided between those who favoured empire tariffs and those devoted to free trade. The Labour party as a whole did not have anything constructive to say about the development of the African colonies in the 1920s. It was the Conservatives and white settlers who were most eager for colonial development in the 1920s.

In 1927 the Conservative Government issued a White Paper on 'Future Policy in Regard to Eastern Africa'.[1] It stated that the presence of the Governors and senior officials of the East African Dependencies had provided an opportunity for discussion of future policy with regard to East Africa. The paper continued to point out that although only four years had elapsed since the Devonshire

1. 'Future Policy in Regard to Eastern Africa', Cmd.2904 (1927)

White Paper, various developments had taken place which necessitated another declaration. There had been the report of the East African Commission.[1] Following this there had been a conference of governors of the East African Dependencies in Nairobi in 1926. The announcement of the conference started a new movement on the part of the European settlers for closer contact between the six territories, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. The main hope was for closer contact between Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. Two unofficial conferences were held by leading settlers of the various dependencies. Other developments also pointed to the necessity of some closer union between the territories: the East African Loans Act necessitated the proper co-ordination of railways and other transport facilities; there was a general move towards co-operation as regards research facilities; there were identical customs tariffs in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, and a customs and postal union between Kenya and Uganda.

The White Paper stated that as a result of these factors, there should be an investigation as to how closer union and co-operation between the territories could be most effectively secured and whether it was possible to provide for increasing association of the immigrant communities in the responsibilities of government and, at the same time, for a more effective machinery of native representation. H.M.G. could not make any final decision until a further Commission of Enquiry had reported from East and Central Africa. They were therefore sending out a Commission to consider the question of closer union and work out how it could take effect. The Government considered that some

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1. Report of the East African Commission, Cmd.2387(1925) see pp.113-121.

form of closer union appeared desirable 'More particularly in regard to the development of transport communications, customs tariffs and customs administration, scientific research and defence'.[1] The White Paper concluded by stating that H.M.G. wished to make it clear that it adhered to the principles of the White Paper 'Indians in Kenya', but 'At the same time they wish to place on record their view that, while these responsibilities of trusteeship must for some considerable time rest mainly on the agents of the Imperial Government, they desire to associate more closely in this high and honourable task those who, as colonists or residents, have identified their interests with the prosperity of the country.'[2] The Conservative Colonial Secretary, Leopold Amery, was keen on the idea of Closer Union. He wrote in his memoirs that 'a project that I had very much at heart was to bring a greater measure of administrative and political unity in Eastern and Central Africa.'[3] In this he had the support of the Governor of Kenya, Sir Edward Grigg.

The White Paper was debated in the House of Commons in July 1927.[4] J.H. Thomas said that when he became Colonial Secretary, there were tremendous pressures upon him to change policy, but, after having looked at the papers, Thomas had decided that not only were the views of the Duke of Devonshire sound but the policy was an unanswerable one. He thought that whatever the differences the parties had in regard to domestic issues, nothing but harm could accrue if it became known in the colonial administration that the policy which governed these

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1. Cmd.2904 (1927) p.6.
2. Cmd.2904, p.7.
3. L.S. Amery, 'My Political Life' (Hutchinson,1954) Vol.2,p.360
4. 209 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols.257-265, 9 July 1927.

territories and millions of lives could not only be changed but thrown into the melting pot with a change of political party at Westminster. Such a position would be ruinous because no Governor or administration could act with confidence, and the result would be chaos and confusion. Now, warned Thomas, a new situation had developed, which to the Labour side of the House was very disturbing. 'We take the view that what we set out to achieve, and that for which the Government of the day were themselves responsible, is not only not likely to be achieved but has been deliberately upset by the changed policy that has been introduced.'[1]

Thomas was concerned lest the Government let the settlers have more responsibility for governing the countries in which they lived. The White Paper had stated that the settlers' 'claim to share progressively in the responsibilities of government cannot be ignored.'[2] Thomas thought that the Colonial Secretary alone should be responsible for the duties of trusteeship and he could not delegate or share that trust with anyone. Thomas wanted to know the names of the Commission.[3] He also asked for an assurance that no changes in East Africa would be made until the House had a full opportunity for discussing the whole situation.

Harry Snell was Labour's other main speaker in the debate.[4] He declared that the Labour party, on the whole,

1. ibid., col.261
2. Cmd.2904(1927)p.5.
3. Amery sent a Commission to East Africa to study the question of Closer Union between Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. The Commission was composed of Sir Hilton Young, Dr. Oldham, Sir George Schuster and Sir Reginald Mant. Its report on 'Closer Union in East and Central Africa' was presented in January 1929, Cmd.3234.
4. 209 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols.275-279, 19 July 1927.

had felt very secure concerning East African affairs under the general principles of the Devonshire White Paper but they could not help feeling a sense of uneasiness and insecurity if the policy was changed in the direction proposed. It was necessary that East Africa should continue under the security of the trusteeship of the Colonial Office until such time as the 'natives' in the area were able, in a greater degree than they were at present, to take care of themselves and pull their weight in any legislative boat that might be launched. The African problem was whether East Africa would develop along the successful lines of West Africa or whether it would develop into a huge plantation system which would create a new set of problems. Snell was afraid that the new White Paper would make the continuation of an all-party front on colonial affairs impossible.

Amery stated[1] that the 1923 White Paper had said that responsible self-government was not in sight. The new White Paper had also rejected the idea of creating self-government for white men for their own affairs while reserving the control of everything affecting the 'native' to the Imperial authorities. That was not a practical form of dyarchy in a country like East Africa, where white and black lived indissolubly bound together and where there was no aspect of self-government which the white could exercise without touching at every moment on his relationship with the black. There, too, the Government had adopted and carried on the principles laid down in the White Paper of 1923. The government said explicitly in the new White Paper that while rejecting the idea of white and black dyarchy, the progress towards self-government on the part of

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1. 209 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols.284-296, 19 July 1927.

the settlers would mean the association of that community with Great Britain in the sense of trusteeship for the weaker and more numerous parts of the population.

In the Lords, Lord Olivier stated that the 1923 declaration that 'native' interests should be paramount had never been put into practice. He wondered whether the Government was going to change that stated 1923 policy under the cover of the new White Paper. Olivier did not like talk about trusteeship. He had been brought up in the Colonial Office when they did not profess to exercise trusteeship but to maintain the principles of freedom and absolute justice in dealing with the 'native' races. He thought that until Britain could maintain equality and give equal political rights in East Africa, she should not give any class a privileged position.[1] Lord Olivier, like Leys, was putting forward the policy of equal rights rather than trusteeship.

Lord Arnold, Thomas's Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, also urged that the Government should not give in to the demands of Lord Delamere and others for an elected European majority over all parties in the Legislative Council of Kenya.[2]

Discussing the White Paper and the debate, 'The Times' thought that the 1923 White Paper had not faithfully represented the facts. In Kenya, the settlers enjoyed in constitutional theory a certain share in the government and in actual practice a very considerable share. The idea that the political and economic development of the settlers and 'natives' could only take place at the expense of each other should be avoided. The essence of the dual policy of

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1. 69 H.L.Deb.,5s., cols.551-574, 7 December 1927.
2. 66 H.L.Deb.,5s., cols.133-146, 17 February 1927.

'native' development and white settlement was that each half of the policy should make the other half easier. The task of the future was to ensure complementary economic and political development. It would not be easy since white settlement and white aspirations advanced much more rapidly than did 'native' political capacity. 'The Times' thought that the main course of 'native' development should lie through invigorated tribal authority and educated chiefs, but for many years to come trusteeship would continue to be a faithful description of the Government's relationship to the bulk of the inhabitants of East Africa. There was everything to be said for Mr. Thomas's plea that there should be the utmost continuity of policy and an agreed body of doctrines on colonial questions so that it was understood that nothing was to be feared from the vicissitudes of domestic politics in Britain. Colonial developments should be beyond the reach of party. There was hardly a more inflammable subject than 'native' labour where trivial, ill-considered and hasty expressions, whether of suspicion or fanaticism at home or of impatience or acquisitiveness overseas, had more power to do harm.[1]

The official Labour attitude was that the Labour party had preserved a policy of continuity with the Duke of Devonshire's declaration of 1923 that African interests should be paramount. The Labour party felt that Devonshire's declaration would be broken if power was given to the white settlers.

The A.C.I.Q. wrote memoranda on 'The present position in East Africa'[2] and 'The federation of East Africa',[3] in

1. 'The Times', 22 July 1927, p15.
2. A.C.I.Q. 'The Present Position in East Africa', 1927.
3. A.C.I.Q. 'The Federation of East Africa', 1927,

which it warned that schemes for closer union or federation were probably aimed at achieving self-government for the whites at the expense of the African inhabitants of East Africa. Harry Snell also wrote a memo on the 'Problem of Forced Labour', in which he stated that the African should be free from compulsion to labour for another person. He believed that the Labour party should definitely set itself against forced labour and any system of taxation which forced the African to leave his own land and work for other people.[1]

In the 'New Statesman' Lord Olivier wrote that 'Dual Policies' did not exist in civilised Christian states. The Government's White Paper stated that Africans had rights but presumably different ones from the Europeans.[2] Olivier thought that 'Future Policy in Regard to East Africa'[3] should be read alongside McGregor Ross's new book on Kenya - 'Kenya from Within'[4], which was a record of the exploits of the 'settler's policy'. The settlers had prevailed on Amery to tear up the Duke of Devonshire's White Paper and promise to invite them to share with the Imperial Government the trusteeship which it had repeatedly promised should continue to be administered by Colonial Office agents alone.[5]

Norman Leys also agreed that Ross's book was the most overwhelming exposure of misgovernment that had been written in modern times.[6] Leys was worried that the Government would give constitutional as well as practical

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1. A.C.I.Q. 'The Labour Party and the Problem of forced Labour', H. Snell, 1927.
2. 'New Statesman', 19 November 1927, p.175.
3. op.cit., Cmd.2904, 1927.
4. McGregor Ross, 'Kenya from Within', (London, 1927)
5. 'New Statesman', 19 November 1927, p.175.
6. 'New Leader', 2 December 1927, p.14.

control to the very people whose incompetence and dishonesty had been so lucidly exposed by McGregor Ross. If this happened, no future Labour Government would be able to ensure that justice was done without subduing a rebellion.

However, C.R. Buxton was not as despondent as Leys about the prospects for the black man. The British working class was waking up to the problem, numerous questions were asked in the House of Commons and debates such as that on the East African Loans Bill had shown that a large number of Labour M.P.'s were well-informed on colonial problems. Kenya was a storm centre where the whites were trying to rush something through before the Labour Government came back to power but articles and books by Leys and Ross were a healthy sign of the times, and the Labour party's pamphlet, 'Labour and the Empire: Africa' showed that the Labour party was concerned with the problem. There had also been an international awakening, J.H. Harris had pointed out that there were three lines of advance in his book 'Slavery or Sacred Trust?'. These were the mandate system, the anti-slavery convention of the 1926 I.L.O. conference, and the decision to form a committee of experts in Geneva who would form, over a period of 2 or 3 years, a convention covering the principal conditions for the employment of 'native' workers throughout the world. C.R. Buxton thought that 'gradualness' was inevitable in colonial questions where public opinion was not well-informed. Any forward movement was beset with additional obstacles unknown in matters of home politics.[1]

The Colonial Office Vote for 1928 was largely concerned with discussion of the Native Lands Trust Ordinance which

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1. 'New Leader', 27 May 1927, p.10; 'New Leader', 6 January 1928, p.5.

purported to give the natives security of tenure on the reserves. The A.C.I.Q. criticised the Bill because, while professing to create security of occupation, in fact it only put up a legal facade behind which the land in the African reserves could be leased to the settlers for any period up to 99 years.[1] The A.C.I.Q. thought that no land in African reserves should be leased to white settlers. The Labour party should oppose the Bill unless it was amended.

In the debate, Harry Snell[2] said that the measure was of fundamental importance and that the general principle of the Bill was good. It could provide a real charter on which everything could be built in the future. However, under the measure as it stood, it would appear that the 'native' was almost entirely at the mercy of the white settlers. Although the white settlers in Kenya were neither better nor worse than any other people in the world, the House of Commons had a very sacred obligation to look after the interests of the 'natives' and had to look very carefully into what was proposed as regards their future. The proposal to lease land within the reserves to white settlers for periods up to 99 years could lead to the white settlers getting hold of the best land. Snell also thought that the Board which was to administer the scheme should be representative of the 'natives'. The Labour party feared that it would represent the views of the settlers and not the desires of the 'natives'. By excluding the 'natives', a great opportunity was being lost to train them. J.H. Thomas put similar points in his speech,[3] and Josiah Wedgwood declared that the Native Land Trust Bill, coming

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 64, June 1928.
2. 219 H.C.Deb.,5s., cols. 2646-2653, June 1928.
3. 219 H.C.Deb.,5s., cols.2693-2697.

as it did, after all the hope of getting the reserves demarcated permanently , had destroyed not only hope but confidence for ever.[1] The Bill was not passed before there was a change of Government and it was altered by the Labour Government.

The Commission, which the Government had sent out to East Africa to investigate the question of closer union under Sir E. Hilton-Young, reported early in 1929.[2] It proposed a central authority for the maintenance of proper principles in regard to dealing with the Africans. A High Commissioner or a Governor-General should be appointed with a council of three territorial governors supported by advisory committees. Responsible government could not be granted to Kenya in the near future. The settlers were not pleased with the report and the Colonial Secretary sent his permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Samuel Wilson, out to East Africa to consult the local governments and report whether the scheme for closer union, which the Commission had suggested, would be workable and acceptable to the three dependencies of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika.

Buxton and most members of the A.C.I.Q. thought that the report of the Commission was much more favourable to Labour's policies than had seemed probable.[3] The demand for closer union had been supported by those who were demanding "responsible government" or a majority in the Legislative Council for the white elected members. The white settlers were disturbed by the possibility that a Labour Secretary of State might put into effect Labour's declared policy as published in its pamphlets on the empire in Africa. 'It is not going too far to say that the demand

1. 219 H.C.Deb.,5s., cols. 2666-2676.
2. Cmd. 3234 (1929)
3. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 68A, February 1929.

for some form of responsible government was due to a wish on the part of the settlers to assure themselves of control over the Legislature before Labour came into office.' Since the Conservative Colonial Secretary, L.S. Amery, had refused the demand for responsible government, the settlers had put their hope of gaining a revision of the constitution on some form of closer union. Although the report had recommended a form of closer union under a Governor-General for Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, it had treated the economic reasons advanced for federation as comparatively unimportant. The greater part of the report was devoted to laying down principles of African policy and suggesting means for putting them into practice. The A.C.I.Q. thought that the report's proposals for a Governor-General and an unofficial majority in the Kenya Legislative Council should not be supported unless it was clearly laid down that the Governor-General was directly responsible to the Secretary of State and Parliament, and that the members of the Kenya Legislative Council nominated to represent African interests were persons in sympathy with the Government policy of trusteeship. The aim should be that eventually Africans would represent their own interests. The main concern of the A.C.I.Q. was that the proposed Governor-General and the new Legislative Council should not neglect the interests of the Africans and forget that the aim of trusteeship was that the Africans should eventually be able to govern themselves.

Lord Olivier wrote in the 'New Statesman' that 'Mr. Amery's good-hearted desire to oblige the aspirations of the Kenya federationists has resulted in the issue of a report which recommends that, so far from giving the local

Europeans greater power in the Government of East Africa, a more efficient Imperial agency should be established to keep them in order.'[1] In the House of Lords, Olivier moved that any proposals for constitutional or administrative changes in East Africa should be submitted for consideration to a Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament. The Labour party would not be bound by any kind of agreement or understanding made between an ambassador, Sir Samuel Wilson, and persons in East Africa.[2]

There was disagreement within the A.C.I.Q. about the Hilton Young Report. Generally it was well received by the Labour experts; Buxton and Olivier[3] thought that the Report was much more favourable to African interests than they were expecting. However, Norman Leys and J.H. Harris, who had now joined the Labour party, felt that the report put too much emphasis on the policy of 'trusteeship'. Leys wrote to Harris that he had 'failed to get the Labour party Advisory Committee to stand by their guns and openly advocate the equal rights policy'. Even Wedgwood seemed to think it better to accept the report. Leys felt that 'the trusteeship policy had never worked whereas the equal rights policy had prevented oppression. To my mind the whole trusteeship policy besides being hopelessly vague and sentimental, is a putting of natives into splints when what they need is to be allowed freedom....This report is always drawing artificial distinctions between races and deducting that in consequence people ought to behave quite differently to them.....I cannot understand why Olivier....

1. 'New Statesman', 26 January 1929, p.489.
2. 73 H.L.Deb.,5s.,cols.470-485, 13 March 1929.
3. Olivier had criticised the 'trusteeship' policy in the Lords but he thought that the Hilton Young report gave the Africans more than equal rights. He believed a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament should reach all-party agree ment on the report. Despite Olivier's doubts about trusteeship, he thought the report should not be completely rejected.

and Buxton cannot see all that. I suppose the explanation is that they believe the proposals of the report would be an improvement on things as they are. But would they?'[1]

The main difference between Leys and the other members of the A.C.I.Q. was that Leys felt that it was vital that the African should be given equal status with the white man and that it was 'heresy' to think that the 'Africans ought to have a future different from other people.'[2] Gupta thinks that most of Labour's colonial experts suffered from a 'racial-cultural typology' apart from Leys. Gupta believes that this stifled serious analysis of African colonial development.[3] Woolf[4] divided the dependencies into three classifications, those of European, Oriental and primitive culture. In the first two self-government could be given when it was demanded by the inhabitants but in the last category a period of paternalist government from London was called for. The Labour party adopted this classification. Gupta argues that the Labour party under-estimated the Africans because it suffered from a superiority complex vis-a-vis the Africans. He seems to imply that the Africans were as ready as the other colonies and dependencies of Asia and Africa for self-government. This may or may not have been true, but very few people thought that the Africans should have responsible government or independence in the 1920s. There were a few on the extreme left of the Labour party who thought that the empire should be abandoned but the experts of the A.C.I.Q., including Norman Leys, believed that independence could not come immediately in Africa. The main worry was that if Britain withdrew

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1. N. Leys to J.H. Harris, 17 February 1929, A.S.A.P.A.Papers, G.144.
2. N. Leys to M.W. Holtby, W. Holtby Papers, 9 June 1932, Drawer 4 File 8.
3. P.S. Gupta, op.cit.,pp.126-132.
4. A.C.I.Q. Memo, No.22 January 1926.

from Africa the white settlers or other Europeans would gain control. It was also felt that the Africans were not educated enough to rule themselves. Norman Leys wrote in the 1920s that 'paternal government' would have to be pursued in Kenya and Tanganyika for 20 years. Leys thought that 'education is the key to everything in Africa. It will require large expenditure' but 'the money cannot be got under the 'plantation' system. It can only be got if West African political and economic methods are followed.' Leys' solution was to extend 'the national franchise to Africans pari passu with the spread of education.'[1] Buxton wrote in the 1920s that if the British withdrew from Africa there would be chaos. Imperialism was necessary so that the empire could be reformed for the benefit of the inhabitants.[2] The majority of the Labour party was committed to reforming the empire rather than withdrawing to leave, as they thought, the Africans at the mercy of the settlers or the Communist International, which, according to Buxton, was stirring up subject peoples in the colonies to armed revolt. (The Labour party was very suspicious of communist organisations - the League Against Imperialism was boycotted.)

However, the party's policy of reform was not very clear. It did not give a clear answer to the question; Should the Africans be educated to take their place in modern civilisation or should they be educated in a different way from white people so that they could use their own tribal institutions to better effect? The party was committed to education but was ambiguous about whether the education

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1. N. Leys, 'Memo on Tropical Africa', 1920s. C.R. Buxton Papers, Box 5/3.
2. C.R. Buxton, 'Colonialism', 1920s, C.R. Buxton Papers Box 5/3.

provided should be the same as was provided for whites or a different, specifically 'African', education. Norman Leys put the emphasis on equal education. Snell appeared to suggest a very paternalist scheme of education for the Africans, and, MacGregor Ross hoped for a better education for the Africans than for Europeans.[1] Leys believed that equal status should be given to whites and blacks and that the franchise should be equally available to all providing they passed an educational test.

Labour party colonial policy towards Africa during the 1920s was directed towards preparing the Africans for eventual independence rather than giving independence immediately. This was a logical policy as long as it was pursued forcefully. It would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for the Africans to rule themselves in the 1920s successfully. A number of factors made it difficult for the party to pursue a positive policy of reform; the leadership of the party was not very interested in the problems of the African colonies, they were more concerned with solving the problem of unemployment. The 1929 General Election manifesto only mentioned the colonies as potential markets: "There is a great market at home which can be developed by increasing the purchasing power of the working classes. There is a greater market overseas, especially in India and the Crown Colonies, where there are eno rmous populations with a very low standard of living and vast underdeveloped resources."[2] Another problem was that the party's policy was ambiguous, and, for all the efforts of the A.C.I.Q., was not very well thought out. There was too much preoccupation with Kenya and too great a

1. N. Leys to W. Holtby, 15 November 1930, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.
2. 1929 General Election Manifesto, (The Labour Party, 1929)

readiness to accept the system in West Africa as almost perfect. MacDonald, Woolf and Green favoured indirect rule, but Leys did not; Green favoured industrial development but others such as Wedgwood and Leys, did not; Snell favoured a paternalist education policy, but Leys did not; Webb and others thought the African was a different type of person to the European but Leys, Maxton and Brockway did not. Another factor was that the trade union movement was not very interested in the colonies and neither was the electorate. The party failed to educate the electorate into appreciating the problems of the African colonies. This was shown by the absence of discussion of African colonial policy in Labour's 1929 election manifesto. The other major factor, which prevented Labour making much progress with its policy of reform, was, that for most of the interwar period, it was out of office. Therefore, when it was in office, it was essential to make as much effort as possible to pursue a policy of positive reform. The dependence of the Labour Governments on Liberal support was not as much a handicap over Africa as is sometimes made out;[1] for the Liberals also believed in reforming the African empire to further the interests of the Africans. Despite all the ambiguities and uncertainties, Labour policy was clear on some things; the white settlers should not be allowed to become more powerful in East Africa, the Africans should have enough land to live on, priority should be given to African education, the burden of taxation should be placed more heavily on the white settlers than the Africans, communal franchises should be abolished, racial discrimination should cease, and there should be no pressure

1. R.G. Gregory op.cit., p.266.

on the Africans to work for Europeans. The members of the A.C.I.Q. were hoping that the second Labour Colonial Secretary would be more successful in instituting reform in Africa than Thomas had been. Leys wrote to Harris: "What a chance to make history the next Labour Colonial Secretary will have! Imagine the result if in all the African dependencies he required the governments to revise all Ordinances so as to eliminate all distinctions of race."[1]

1. N. Leys to J.H. Harris, 20 January 1929, A.S.A.P.S. Papers G.144.

CHAPTER 6.

THE SECOND LABOUR GOVERNMENT -

EAST AFRICA

The result of the General Election that took place on 30 May 1929 was that Labour gained 8,360,000 votes and 287 seats, the Conservatives 8,664,000 votes and only 261 seats and the Liberals 5,300,000 votes and the grossly disproportionate number of 59 seats.[1] In this election, the quirks of the British electoral system had benefited the Labour party at the expense of the other two parties. Labour needed less votes to win a seat than the Conservative or Liberal parties. Among the Labour M.P.s there was a large increase in the total sponsored by divisional Labour parties - 128 as against 25 in 1924, and, for the first time, trade-union sponsored M.P.s numbered less than half of the total - 115. The I.L.P. sponsored successes amounted to 36, nearly half of them being in Scotland, and the Co-operative party won 9 seats. The Labour party had made the most progress in London and in Lancashire where the cotton industry was going through a depression.[2]

The uncertainty about which party or combination of parties would form the government was ended on 4 June when Baldwin resigned and the King sent for MacDonald and asked him to form a government. MacDonald again chose the Labour ministers, although he did consult with senior colleagues. MacDonald interviewed Sidney Webb on 6 June 1929 and the conclusion of the interview was that Webb accepted a peerage in order to take over the Dominions and Colonial Office. However, Sidney Webb had not been the first choice for Dominions and Colonial Secretary. The way the Cabinet was chosen depended on a number of involved factors, political and personal, the least

1. C.F. Brand, 'The British Labour Party' (London: OUP, 1965),p.133.
2. H. Pelling, 'A Short History of the Labour Party' (London, 1968, 3rd Edition),pp.63-64.

important seemed to be who was most suited for which post. Thomas and Henderson both wanted the Foreign Office. MacDonald seemed inclined to give the Foreign Office to Thomas; but Henderson was determined to be Foreign Secretary,[1] and became 'very angry' when it was suggested that Thomas should be given the post. MacDonald then tried to persuade Thomas to take the Dominions and Colonial Office, which Thomas was reluctant to do, if Henderson was going to be Foreign Secretary. The fact that the Dominions and Colonial Office was offered to Thomas suggests that MacDonald had no complaints about the way Thomas had handled the Colonial Office in 1924, and that MacDonald was not putting a priority on enforcing the rights of Africans against those of the settlers in East Africa. Thomas did, however, decide to accept the Dominions and Colonial Office because he thought that MacDonald was going to be Foreign Secretary again. When Thomas found that this was not so, he was annoyed that he had been 'tricked' by Henderson and refused to be Dominions and Colonial Secretary. In the end, Thomas decided to accept the post of Lord Privy Seal and Director-General of Employment Schemes.[2]

The next person who was considered to be Dominions and Colonial Secretary was, according to Snowden, A.V. Alexander.[3] Initially, it seems that Sidney Webb was only going to be given a peerage. When the Webbs heard this from Parmoor, they were a 'wee bit disconcerted' that MacDonald had intended to leave Sidney Webb out of the Cabinet, for the Webbs had decided that Sidney would not

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1. D. Marquand, op.cit., pp.489-491
2. P. Snowden, 'An Autobiography', Vol. 2 (London,1934) pp.760-766.
3. A.V. Alexander had been a stoker in the navy and was an important figure in the co-operative movement.

accept a peerage unless he was given office.[1] MacDonald then decided that, since the Labour Government had to have two Secretaries of State in the House of Lords to comply with constitutional convention, Sidney Webb should be given a peerage to become Secretary of State for the Dominions and the Colonies. Alexander became the First Lord of the Admiralty.

Beatrice records that 'Sidney was delighted with the C.O.: it is his old office as a civil servant, one about which he knows a good deal more than some others.'[2] The appointment seemed more promising than that of J.H. Thomas in 1924. Webb had been a civil servant in the Colonial Office, as Beatrice pointed out, and he was one of the leading 'Intellectuals' of the Labour party. (M. Perham referred to him as 'the leading expert on Labour practice and philosophy'.)[3] It was largely due to him that the advisory committees had been set up after the First World War. However, he was over 70 when he became Secretary of State and his main reforming impulses had always been directed towards domestic politics. Leonard Woolf wrote that 'Sidney was in politics curiously ambivalent; he must have been born half a little Conservative and half a little Liberal. He was a progressive, even a revolutionary, in some economic and social spheres; where the British Empire was concerned he was a common or garden imperialist conservative.'[4] Drummond Shiels thought that he was more interested in 'investigating and devising the form and machinery of government and administration than

1. M.I. Cole, ed. 'Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1924-32' (London, 1956), pp.196-197.
2. Diaries, op.cit., p.197.
3. M. Perham, East African Journey (London, 1976), p.16.
4. L. Woolf, 'Downhill All the Way' (London, 1967), p.236.

in considering how these could and should be applied to a world-wide variety of human beings by other human beings.'[1] Sidney Webb could not understand why some people became so worked up about political issues and why there was always such a note of urgency in the demands of outside political and humanitarian organisations. Webb believed in evolutionary socialism but his progress in colonial affairs was so slow that to many it could hardly be detected. Beatrice contrasted his attitude to that of Wedgwood who was always demanding fervent partisanship. Wedgwood was angry at Sidney's lack of unqualified enthusiasm for the cause of the Jewish settlers and lack of unqualified hostility to the English settlers in Kenya. Sidney, wrote his wife, had no dislikes for a particular person or community; he only asked about a particular project 'how would it work, what state of affairs would it bring about and would the persons concerned be likely to benefit or lose by it?' He was singularly indifferent to whether his way prevailed. If the Cabinet decided to listen to other voices he would carry out their wishes to the best of his ability. 'When he is acting in a responsible administration he is, in fact, an excellent civil servant - his instinct is to obey the orders of his chief and make the best of the business.'[2] Fenner Brockway of the I.L.P. thinks that Webb made an ineffectual minister. He was not very good in Parliament; the Tories disliked him because he was a middle-class intellectual who had turned against his class and joined the socialists.[3] One of Webb's achievements, while he was Colonial Secretary, was

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1. Drummond Shiels, op.cit.,p.203
2. B. Webb Diaries, op.cit.,p.230
3. Interview, 24 July 1973.

that he did unify the Colonial service. This was a scheme which he prepared on his own initiative. He announced his intention of proceeding with the scheme for the unification of the Colonial Service at a dinner on 16 July 1930, when he said that he had secured the help of Sir Warren Fisher, the Permanent Secretary of the Treasury in the making of the plan. There were difficulties to be overcome because of the different conditions of entry into the Service in the different Colonies.[1] However, Webb went ahead with his scheme and the Service was unified. It seemed that Webb, or Lord Passfield as he became, enjoyed devising administrative reforms better than dealing with the political problems of the Colonial Office. However, the effects of this reform were that it made it more difficult for indigenous people to become colonial civil servants.[2]

One of the earliest debates that the Colonial Office became engaged in during Passfield's tenure was that over the Colonial Development Bill. The main reason that the Colonial Development Bill was introduced was to encourage employment at home in Britain rather than to develop the colonies.[3] J.H. Thomas, George Lansbury, Tom Johnston and Sir Oswald Mosley had been appointed as a sub-committee to prepare work schemes. Mosley asked the House to accept the scheme because the credits which it would provide would mean the purchase of steel and other articles from Britain.[4] The idea was not primarily a Labour one, it had been first

1. D. Shiels 'Sidney Webb as a Minister' in M.I. Cole (ed.), 'The Webbs and their Work', (London,1949),p.203
2. K. Robinson 'Dilemmas of Trusteeship' (London,1965),pp.43-5
3. E.A. Brett, op.cit., p.133
4. Fenner Brockway, 'Inside the Left' (London, 1947 ed.)p.200.

proposed by the Conservatives,[1] and was basically designed to alleviate British unemployment. The act authorised grants of up to £1,000,000 a year for schemes in the colonies; one of the largest was a scheme for a bridge over the Zambezi. By March 1931, the Colonial Development schemes were thought to be providing 7,000 men with direct employment in Britain.[2]

One of the main problems of the Bill from the point of view of the Labour party's colonial experts was that it permitted the use of forced labour and, even forced child labour, on jobs that it financed.[3] Fenner Brockway and C.R. Buxton protested about this in the Second Reading Debate. Fenner Brockway, making his maiden speech, said that the Government should seek to prepare and bring before the International Labour Office a definite code, laying down the minimum of conditions for the workers in these countries. This should include the definite prohibition of forced labour and the prohibition of child labour, at least under the age of 12, on such schemes. He hoped that in carrying out the schemes a proportion of the expenditure would be spent in the reserves. Any increased value of land which resulted from the development of the schemes should go to the benefit of the public and not private individuals. Brockway also thought that the new developments should be under public auspices and not conducted by private enterprise.[4]

Amery, the former Colonial Secretary, thought that the Governments of the Colonies should be allowed to determine whether child labour should be employed on the schemes.[5]

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1. D. Goldsworth, 'Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-61 (Oxford,1971),p.114.
2. R. Skidelsky, 'Politicians and the Slump' (London,1970 ed.)p.337.
3. Fenner Brockway, op.cit.,p.200
4. 230 H.C. Deb.,5s., cols.505-509,17 July 1929.
5. ibid, 739-740.

However, Charles Buxton strongly disagreed: forced labour and child labour were likely under the work and enterprises stimulated and encouraged by the Bill unless there was a definite restriction against them.[1] Lunn, the Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, stated that all possible precautions would be taken to ensure that recourse would not be had to forced labour of any kind and that the amount of labour drawn from any one tribe was not so large as to have a detrimental effect on tribal life.[2]

However, Brockway was not satisfied that child labour would not result unless a definite provision was inserted to exclude it. At the Committee stage of the Bill, Brockway stated that "unless a provision is inserted definitely excluding child labour, I and my friends will vote against the Bill."[3] The Government reconsidered, after Brockway had met Mosley and Colonial Office officials, and an amendment was accepted to prohibit child labour on Government schemes of work.[4] This is an example of the humanitarian lobby achieving some success in persuading the Labour Government not to completely follow civil servant advice.

Lord Passfield was not very closely involved with the Colonial Development Bill. He left his Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Lunn, to handle the Colonial Office side of the Bill. Lunn moved from the Colonial Office in a Government reshuffle at the end of the year and was replaced by Drummond Shiels for whom Passfield had originally asked.[5] Mrs. Webb, who refused to be called Lady Passfield,

1. ibid., 740-743
2. ibid., 471-478
3. Brockway, op.cit., p.201.
4. ibid, p.202.
5. Diaries, op.cit.,p.198.

thought that Drummond Shiels was conceited and regarded himself and his opinions and his future as important to the world's history. She thought he had an equal contempt for the revolutionary folly of the Clyde and the reactionary conservatism of government officials. Mrs. Webb suspected that Shiels regarded himself as Sidney's guardian rather than Sidney's subordinate. He said to her: "I hope I shall be able to agree with your husband's policy. I want to be loyal to him in the House of Commons".[1] Drummond Shiels was to exert pressure on Lord Passfield to try to persuade him not to always follow the advice of his senior civil servants.

One of the major problems of the Colonial Office, with which Lord Passfield was very closely connected, was that of East Africa. East Africa's main territories were Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. Uganda was a protectorate and with its small number of white settlers, escaped the main pressures of the Closer Union controversy. Tanganyika was a League of Nations Mandate and its Governor, Sir Donald Cameron was strongly committed to the policy of trusteeship. He believed in using 'indirect rule' to train the Africans in local self-government. Cameron, according to M. Perham, was completely opposed to the Governor of Kenya, Sir Edward Grigg[2], in temperament and political ideals. Cameron was very keen on putting the interests of the Africans first and was sympathetic to Labour policy. Therefore, the main area of controversy was Kenya where the Governor and the settlers wanted to extend the power of the settlers so that the colony would be controlled by the white settlers for the foreseeable future, if not for ever. In a memorandum written

1. ibid., p.232.
2. M. Perham, East African Journey (London,1976),pp.14-18.

for the Cabinet in November 1929, Passfield wrote that no subject had given him so much cause for consideration as the changes to be made in East Africa. 'I think that Kenya has been in my thoughts every day since we took office.'[1] Beatrice wrote in her diary that Sidney was spending long days at the Colonial Office interviewing endless people. His attention was concentrated on Kenya, where the Permanent Head of the Colonial Office, Sir Samuel Wilson, had been enquiring on the spot to test the conclusions of Hilton Young's Report. Mrs. Webb enjoyed watching her husband in the role of an administrator again. He was intent, she thought, on discovering what was practicable in the direction of racial equality and preventing oppressive policy on the part of the white settlers. Kenya was the dominant problem of Colonial administration outside the Dominions.[2]

Passfield issued the report of his Permanent Secretary, Sir Samuel Wilson, as a White Paper,[3] although he emphasised in the foreword that this did not mean that the Government accepted it but would be issuing its own conclusions later on. The Wilson Report was more favourable to the settlers than the Hilton Young Report. Wilson drew up a scheme of economic co-ordination and provided for a High Commissioner to put this into effect. The High Commissioner would be assisted by a federal council with an official majority on which the three territories, Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, would be represented. The Kenya Legislative Council was to be reconstituted with the four groups - officials, elected members, nominated members to represent general African interests and Indians - balancing each other so that none

1. C.P. 308 (29), November 1929.
2. Diaries, op.cit., p.204.
3. 'Report of Sir Samuel Wilson on his visit to East Africa, 1929', Cmd.3378.

had a clear majority. However, there would be an unofficial, although not an elected, majority. Wilson had persuaded the settlers to accept this and drop their claim for an elected majority on the Council. This, and the shelving of the question of the common roll, led to Wilson's report being favourably received among the settlers. Wilson also managed to win the approval of the Governors of Uganda and Kenya, but the Governor of Tanganyika, Sir Donald Cameron, thought that it would be better to postpone any action until it was possible to formulate a 'native' policy for East Africa. In his memoirs, Cameron wrote that the attitude of the European settlers was obstructing a solution. They were seeking to obtain a settlement which would secure to them the political control exercised by the Home Government.[1] Sir Donald Cameron suggested that a 'highly authoritative Committee or Commission' should be set up in London which would examine witnesses and give those who were not in favour of the principles advocated in the Hilton Young report an opportunity to state their views. The members of the A.C.I.Q. were more strongly against the Wilson Report than Cameron. McGregor Ross thought that it was a 'poisonous and foolish productinn'.[2] The A.C.I.Q., the A.S.A.P.S., and Cameron, Lugard and Oldham started a campaign to ensure that it was not put into effect.

Sir Donald Cameron, with Lord Lugard and Oldham, the secretary of the International Missionary Society, had been waging a fight to stop the Conservative ministers, Amery and Grigg, from imposing a pro-settler constitution in East Africa. They viewed the change of Government as a great

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1. Sir D. Cameron, 'My Tanganyika Service and Some Nigeria' (London,1939),pp.232-3.
2. McGregor Ross to Northey 26 December 1929, McGregor Ross Papers.

opportunity and, writes Margery Perham, 'turned to the new ministers like flowers to the sun.'[1] Lugard did not agree with those in the Labour party who thought that the British Empire was based upon exploitation but he did take the duty of trusteeship seriously. He did not wish to see the white settlers maintaining white supremacy for all time. With Cameron and Oldham, he wished to reach all-party agreement on East Africa espedally since the new ministry was not in a very secure position. In order to try to bring this about Lord Lugard went to see Passfield early in September. After dinner, the two of them went on talking until midnight, Passfield taking notes. Lugard thought that Passfield was 'most grateful for my advice. He was really entirely in agreement with me, but could only do what was practicable. The Colonial Office naturally wanted the line of the least resistance. He could not bind himself to do nothing without previously consulting me but would do his best to do so.'[2]

Passfield's attitude to the problem of change in East Africa seems to have been that 'we cannot get improvements in these places faster than our officials can be persuaded to go. Theirs are the hands that must carry out the reforms; and we have to carry them with us in each successive change, which must be mainly a change of spirit.' However, Drummond Shiels thought that Passfield had not realised that many of the younger men in the Colonial field, as well as in the Colonial Office itself, had already got this change of spirit and were expecting a vigorous lead in applying it from the new Labour Government.[3]

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1. M. Perham, 'Lugard, The Years of Authority',1898-1945 (London,1960),p.686.
2. ibid.,pp.686-687
3. Shiels, op.cit.,p.207.

According to the 'New Leader'[1] the fate of 10 million Africans hung in the balance as a result of the Wilson Report: should the country be ruled in the Africans' interests or in the interests of the 20,000 European settlers? Both parties had stated that 'native interests must be paramount.' The point had now been reached when it was necessary to decide by what means effect would be given to these declarations. The African was, however, totally unfitted to exercise the franchise, he had not long 'emerged from barbarism' and his condition was still backward. Immediate self-government was out of the question, and Hilton Young had recommended a High Commissioner to look after 'native' interests. The Wilson report had agreed that there should be a High Commissioner to co-ordinate the policies of the three territories but had recommended that 'native' affairs be entrusted to the local legislatures. The writer of the article, Chirgwin, thought that the utmost opposition should be given to this recommendation. History showed that once a class had complete political power, it used it for its own advantage. A disinterested authority was clearly needed which could hold the scales evenly between white and black, until such time as the African people attained political manhood.

A sign that the Africans were becoming more aware of their political rights and might be able to represent themselves on Legislative Councils was the development of African political associations such as the Kikuyu Central Association. In 1929, the K.C.A. sent J. Kenyatta to London to present Kikuyu grievances, demand the recognition of the K.C.A. and African representation on the Legislative Council. He arrived in London in February 1929, with an

1. 'New Leader', 7 February 1930, p.6., article by A.M. Chirgwin.

Indian lawyer, Isher Dass, to 'interview the Secretary of State on problems affecting the Kikuyu tribe, especially the land question.'[1] Kenyatta was not permitted to see the Conservative Colonial Secretary, Leopold Amery, neither was he permitted to see his successor, Lord Passfield, although he was allowed to see the Under-Secretary, Drummond Shiels.[2] McGregor Ross took Kenyatta to the House of Commons to meet Dr. Shiels on 23 January 1930. Shiels told him that the propaganda of the Kikuyu Central Association should be on strictly constitutional lines; Britain could command great forces if it became necessary to deal with any unconstitutional action. Kenyatta, said Shiels, would do well to consider the experience of the Labour party in Britain from the time when it had only three M.P.s up to the present time when there was a Labour Government. Kenyatta requested the release of Harry Thuku, who had led the unsuccessful African uprising in 1922.[3] Kenyatta was disappointed by his reception by the official Labour party and turned to the I.L.P. and the League Against Imperialism. The Governor of Kenya wrote to Shiels very much regretting that he had interviewed Kenyatta and saying that he thought that Kenyatta was a communist.[4] Although Kenyatta visited Russia, he was not a communist,[5] and Drummond Shiels wrote back to Grigg, the Governor, that Kenyatta and the K.C.A. should be sympathetically handled by the administration and, if possible, kept on the right lines.[6] Kenyatta wrote to

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1. 'The Times', 21 February 1929.
2. G. Delf, 'Jomo Kenyatta' (London,1961),p.69.
3. C.O. 533/395, File No. 16010/A,Report meeting Shiels and Kenyatta, 23 January 1930.
4. C.O. 533/395, File No.16010/A,Grigg to Shiels,12 March 1930.
5. Interview with Brockway, 24 July 1973.
6. C.O. 533/395, File No. 16010/A, Shiels to Grigg,14 May 1930.

Passfield expressing Kikuyu grievances and Passfield passed the letter on to Grigg,[1] who did not pay any attention to the grievances, and, ignored Shiels' request to handle Kenyatta and the K.C.A. sympathetically. Kenyatta's demands became more extreme as he became more and more disappointed with the way he had been treated by the Labour Government. He had not come to England demanding independence for the Africans in Kenya but by the time he left, he was making this demand.

Grigg, himself, had visited England early in 1929 to discuss the proposals for closer union. He agreed with the Wilson report and left London with the impression that Passfield was also prepared to accept the main outlines of the Wilson plan.[2] However, the A.C.I.Q. were trying to make sure that the Wilson plan was not implemented. At a meeting on 30 October 1929, it considered memoranda on the Wilson Report and on the practical steps which should be taken by the Labour Government to carry out the Labour party's colonial policy. The practical steps that the committee felt should be taken were that there should be a declaration of the elimination of inequality before the law in Africa, an extension of the franchise on a civilisation test to all communities, taxation proposals to make the settlers pay more tax in proportion to their income, the creation of a Board to invite applications for land from landless Africans and proposals concerning coffee-growing and the abolition of forced labour.[3] The members of the A.C.I.Q. were against the Wilson proposals because they felt that they would allow the white settlers to gain

1. C.O.533/395, File No.16010/A,Kenyatta to Passfield, 15 April 1930, Passfield to Grigg, 6 May 1930.
2. E. Huxley, 'White Man's Country', Vol. 2, 1914-1931 (London,1935),pp.233-4.
3. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 30 October, 1929.

political independence eventually. Despite the arguments of Leys, C.R. Buxton and most of the A.C.I.Q. were strongly in favour of the Hilton Young proposals for a High Commissioner who would have overall responsibility for African policy.[1] The A.C.I.Q. sent its memoranda on these questions to the National Executive Committee and Lord Passfield[2] but it did not exert very much influence on the party's colonial policy when it was in office. Lord Passfield preferred to listen to the advice of his civil servants rather than that of the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, although he had helped to set up the latter body. C.R. Buxton wrote to him reminding him of 'the strong feelings on native policy' and that it was 'absolutely necessary to take a firm line' against Wilson which was inconsistent with party policy.[3] The A.S.A.P.S. also wrote to Passfield, urging him to enforce 'native rights'.[4] However, Passfield's civil servants, not unexpectedly, tended to support the report of the Permanent Secretary, Sir Samuel Wilson. By November 1929 Lord Passfield had prepared his memorandum for the Cabinet on proposals for closer union in East Africa. It seemed to be a combination of the Wilson proposals and Lord Lugard's call for an all-party committee. Passfield was more influenced by his Permanent Secretary and Lord Lugard than the A.C.I.Q. Beatrice reported that he had prepared a memo setting forth what he

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1. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 13 November 1929.
2. International Sub-Committee of the N.E.C., Minutes, 26 November 1929.
3. C.R. Buxton to Passfield, 8 October 1929, Buxton Papers Box 5/3
4. A.S.A.P.S. to Passfield, 31 October 1929, A.S.A.P.S. Papers G145.

believed to be a wise compromise between the Hilton Young and Wilson reports. He thought that his report should be submitted to a Joint Committee of both Houses, which, considering all three reports, would be able to work out a plan which would be acceptable to all parties.[1]

Passfield's memo[2] began by stating that whatever the Cabinet decided to do they would be sure to be subjected to a hurricane of criticism, campaigns of letter writing and newspaper articles but they should ignore all this and take the decision which would promise the best results. Passfield hoped to allay the apprehensions of those interested in the welfare of the 'natives' by an authoritative pronouncement on 'native' policy which would be published as a White Paper in continuation of those of 1923 and 1927. He thought that he could largely silence others who might be vocal by declaring that the Government would submit its proposals to a Joint Committee of both Houses which would give lasting authority to any decision concerning constitutional change.

The outstanding issues which had to be considered were whether a new officer should be appointed whose duty would be to supervise Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. If it was decided to appoint such an officer, it would have to be decided what his functions and powers should be in relation to the three governments which, between them, exercised jurisdiction over an area not far short of that of British India and secondly, what alteration, if any, there should be in the composition of the Kenya Legislative Council. Passfield stated that most people

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1. B. Webb, 'Diaries', op.cit.,p.229.
2. C.P.308 (29),November 1929.

thought that such an officer should be appointed but there was debate about what his powers should be. The Hilton Young Commission had thought that he should be expressly in control of 'native' policy in which he would not only dictate administration to all three Governors, but would also largely relieve the Secretary of State of his duties of 'trusteeship'. Passfield had come to the conclusion that this was both impracticable and undesirable. 'Native' policy touched so many questions that to take all responsibility for it out of the hands of the Governors would be a severe reduction of their powers. There was also the impracticality of transferring 'native' policy to the Governor-General or High Commissioner because H.M.G. was responsible for 'native' policy, as had been emphasised by the League of Nations Covenant and, more specifically, insisted upon in the mandate for Tanganyika. Sir Samuel Wilson's mission, which, said Passfield, he had discharged with ability, tact and discretion, had been most helpful in discovering what the people of the territories thought and what could be put into operation.

In Passfield's opinion the case had been made out for the closer union of the economic services, together with defence and central research. There was also some need for centralised supervision to ensure that there were no departures from H.M.G.'s declaration on 'native' policy, the obligations under the League of Nations Covenant and, as regards Tanganyika, the observance of the conditions of the mandate. Passfield thought that a High Commissioner should be appointed who would exercise effective control over economic services through a joint council with legislative powers. The High Commissioner would also be

the permanent Chairman of the Conference of Governors, which should be summoned regularly for consultation on all important matters. In this way, the High Commissioner would exercise influence on 'native' policy which would be compatible with the continued existence of separate governments. He would be in a position to advise directly the Secretary of State for the Colonies. However, this would not imply any devolution; on all matters the High Commissioner would carry out the instructions of the Secretary of State. In Kenya, the High Commissioner would be responsible for 'native' lands to ensure that they were not 'nibbled away'.

Concerning the Kenya Legislative Council, Passfield thought that the Council of 11 elected European members, 5 elected Indian members, 1 elected Arab member and 20 officials, 11 ex-offido and 9 nominated by the Governor and 1 nominated unofficial missionary to represent 'native' interests, had not proved satisfactory in carrying out the requirements of H.M.G. in 1923 for the 'protection and advancement of the natives.' The Colonial Secretary believed that the interests of the 'natives' had not been sufficiently promoted. Direct taxation on the 'natives' was in excess of the expenditure on services especially provided for them. The special requirements of the European population had been disproportionately regarded. However, it was not practical to withdraw from the Europeans the right to elect their own members, and Passfield proposed to increase their respresentation from 11 to 13. It was no less impractical to enfranchise the two million 'natives' even if we could find any Governor ready to admit that there is, at present, a single East African educated and, at the same time, of sufficient standing and influence to

keep his end up in the Council.'[1] Passfield came to the conclusion that a nominated majority should be substituted for an official majority. There should be 5 ex-officio members and the Governor should be required to nominate up to 15 other members. The Colonial Secretary thought that this was the only way to get missionary and other philanthropic defenders of 'native' interests into the Kenya Legislative Council. He was aware that some might object that the substitution of a nominated for an official majority was a triumph for the white settlers; but this was not the case; it was merely proposed to substitute a nominated majority for an official one and there was no instance in Colonial history indicating that this would lead to responsible government for the white settlers.

On the Indian question, Passfield wrote that the Indian population regarded their separate register as a badge of inferiority, and the Indians in Kenya, mainly at the instigation of Indian nationalists, were vehemently demanding inclusion with the Europeans on a common register. Passfield thought that this might result in no Indians being elected. Although the Indians had withdrawn from their seats in the Kenya Legislative Council in order to enforce this demand, Lord Passfield felt that any immediate merging of the two communal registers was quite impractical[2] and he proposed to raise the number of Indians on the Council from 5 to 6.

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1. This type of statement indicates that Passfield did not have a very high regard for the Africans.
2. Shiels disagreed with Passfield over this point. Shiels told Leys that he supported Labour party policy which was that, wherever there were elections, a common franchise should be adopted. Leys to W. Holtby, 29 May 1930, Holtby Papers, File 8.

Lord Passfield's memo was circulated to the Cabinet. Wedgwood Benn,[1] the Secretary of State for India, disagreed with some of Passfield's proposals and wrote a memo in which he put forward his views.[2] Wedgwood Benn wrote that the main purpose of the Hilton Young Commission had been to devise changes which would give effect to what they conceived to be the true lines of 'native' policy in East Africa. By far the most important recommendation of the Hilton Young Commission was the proposal that the central authority should be responsible not only for economic services but also for the co-ordination of 'native' policy and the protection of minorities. The scheme of the Colonial Secretary would invest the central authority with control over the economic services and 'native' lands in Kenya only, while with regard to 'native' policy he would be little more than a watchdog. These proposals were radically different from those of Hilton Young. Wedgwood Benn would not have felt forced to write a memo if the proposals of Lord Passfield had not prejudicially affected the position of the Indians in Kenya. He thought that the decision to end the official majority on the Kenya Legislative Council was not in the interests of the 'natives' and the minorities. 'It is notorious that in the past the Kenya Government, even with an official majority in the Council, has failed to protect either native or Indian interests, Lord Passfield admitted this. How, then, can it be expected that those interests will be adequately protected if the official majority is surrendered, and if the central

1. Wedgwood Benn (1887-1960) had been a Liberal M.P. from 1906-27 and joined the Labour party in 1927. He was created a peer in 1941 becoming Lord Stansgate. He was not directly related to Josiah Wedgwood.
2. C.P. 319 (29) November 1929.

authority has no powers of effective control?' The view would be held in India that the surrender of the official majority was the price paid for the consent of the settlers to the scheme of economic federation.

Turning to the question of the common roll, Wedgwood Benn emphasised the extraordinary unity of Indian political opinion on the matter. All Indian classes and all shades of political opinion were behind the Government of India on this question. Communal franchise was regarded as a debased form of citizenship, political segregation and a badge of racial inferiority. More serious still, the treatment of Indians in Kenya was regarded as a test of British sincerity. Although Wedgwood Benn agreed that the compulsory introduction of the common roll was not practicable, he wasgrievously disappointed by the recommendations and thought them likely to worsen the situation in India just when the recent announcement by Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, that dominion status was the natural issue of India's constitutional progress had done something to revive a spirit of trust, mutual co-operation and understanding.

Wedgwood Benn hoped that the Government would announce that it accepted the recommendation of the Hilton Young Commission that the common roll was the ideal to be aimed at and would do everything possible to achieve that object, initiating, as a first step, inquiries preliminary to the adoption of a civilisation test. Until the Government could give the Indians some tangible proof that this policy was being adopted, Wedgwood Benn felt that the official majority on the Kenya Legislative Council should not be abolished. He also hoped that the Government would make it clear that the common roll, when adopted, would admit not

only Europeans and Indians but all classes who could satisfy the education and property qualifications ultimately adopted, including Africans.

Wedgwood Benn also circulated a telegram from the Viceroy dated 16 November 1929[1] which stated that Passfield's proposals closely resembled Sir Samuel Wilson's. Concerning closer union, the Viceroy felt that the scheme of joint councils with legislative powers to aid the High Commissioner was repugnant to the terms of the Tanganyika mandate and far more likely to promote foreign criticism than the administrative union proposed by the Hilton Young Commission. If European opposition ruled out the idea of merging the communal registers, Indian opposition ought to rule out the idea of diverging from the status quo over the composition of the Legislative Council. Viewed collectively, Lord Passfield's proposals amounted to a complete defeat for the Indian point of view on all three major points - federation, common electoral roll and composition of the Kenya Legislative Council.[2] The Viceroy felt that should Lord Passfield's views prevail, the Secretary of State for India should press the Cabinet to reach no conclusions on contentious points but refer them to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament, before which the Indian Government should be allowed, as a special case, to present the Indian view.

Passfield's policy on Closer Union was discussed at the Cabinet on 27 November 1929. At this meeting, it was decided that Lord Passfield should lay some more papers

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1. C.P.325 (29) November 1929.
2. Lord Passfield, like Thomas, favoured policies which were more acceptable to the settlers than the Indians or Africans.

before the Cabinet. He should write a statement of 'native' policy for the guidance of the Governors in East and Central Africa, this could be published as a White Paper. He should also write a commentary, preceded by a foreword in his name, on the position arising out of the Reports of the Hilton Young Commission and Sir Samuel Wilson, which, with the approval of the Cabinet, should be published and put before the proposed Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament as a basis for discussion.[1]

The A.C.I.Q. was worried when the members heard of Passfield's proposals. Leys wrote to Harris that 'the awful thing is that Passfield is surrounded in the Colonial Office with people who hate our policy and so also do the Governors and high officials in East Africa'.[2] He was trying to make sure that Passfield was bombarded with protests. C.R. Buxton wrote to MacDonald to tell him that a sharp break with the past was expected from the Labour party. He was worried that Passfield was not carrying out the party policy which also had the support of the Liberals.[3] Buxton, Wedgwood, and Scurr, went to see MacDonald to ask for a common electoral roll in East Africa and a refusal to give the white settlers the dominating voice in the Kenya Legislative Council. MacDonald listened to them, while reading his correspondence, and then passed them on to Lord Passfield,[4] who listened to their arguments but pointed out the difficulty of moving quickly in East Africa.

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1. C.P. 360(29)
2. Leys to Harris, 8 November 1929 A.S.A.P.S. Papers G145.
3. Buxton to MacDonald, 11 November 1929, C.R. Buxton Papers, Box 5/3.
4. 'Diaries', op.cit.,p.227.

Beatrice wrote in her diary for 28 November 1929 that 'the Left-wing is in revolt - determined to have the blood of the settlers - to make them feel that they are beaten. So the Cabinet decided that the document submitted to the Joint Committee should not be a scheme for reform but a memo discussing different proposals and that the Joint Committee is to be left to decide which proposals it will agree to.[1] Sidney, says Beatrice, admired the way in which MacDonald handled the situation, whether discussing it with enthusiasts, or with him or with the Cabinet. He was very considerate to Sidney and appreciative of his efforts to find a solution to an almost insoluble problem. The difference between the Colonial Office and the 'pro-native' enthusiasts was not in aim but in methods. Beatrice reported that Lord Passfield had said to MacDonald that he should not worry about him and his views. 'I have done my best to get a workable scheme of reform - but it is so uncertain how things will work that I'm quite ready to leave the final decision to the Joint Committee.'[2] Beatrice Webb[3] thought that this would mean that the eventual decision would be taken by another Colonial Secretary since the Committee was going to be a large one and was going to call witnesses. She thought that Josiah Wedgwood was the prime mover of the revolt on the left, 'partly because he is a fanatical believer in crude political democracy on a strictly numerical basis.' Wedgwood had always been foremost in the campaign to abolish the communal voting system whether in India or Africa. Mrs. Webb also thought

1. ibid., p.227
2. ibid., p.229
3. M. Cole 'B. Webb', (London, 1945),p.158-9.

that his opposition was based upon a desire to upset MacDonald's government: 'there had been continual antagonism between the two men; after Wedgwood had failed to obtain the position that he wanted in the first Labour Government, he had done his best to affect a change of leadership.'[1] In his memoirs, Wedgwood does not say much about the second Labour Government: 'Over MacDonald's second Labour Government I prefer to draw a veil. It was not a success and ended unpleasantly....Webb was deplorable at the Colonial Office.'[2] However, the protests against Passfield's policy were not confined to Wedgwood. The feeling covered the A.S.A.P.S., many Liberals, Oldham, Lugard and the A.C.I.Q.

As Drummond Shiels, Passfield's Under-Secretary, wrote the policies of the Colonial Office were subjected to close scrutiny by the Labour party's A.C.I.Q. The Committee was stimulated into great activity over the question of Kenya particularly by Dr. Norman Leys, McGregor Ross and Archdeacon Owen.[3] Shiels attended the Committee in May 1931 to discuss African policy,[4] but Lord Passfield preferred to follow the advice of the senior men in the Colonial Office and, writes Shiels, was 'perhaps, inclined to accept their judgements without always applying the same critical examination which he gave to other matters.'[5] However, Mrs. Webb thought that Drummond Shiels was too convinced of his own importance; his views changed: 'from insisting on a High Commissioner with the powers of an Indian Viceroy over the Governors of the three East African territories, he jumped to a High Commissioner who should be strictly limited to the management of the technical services

1. J.C. Wedgwood, op.cit., p.187.
2. J.C. Wedgwood, op.cit., p.205.
3. Shiels, op.cit., p.203f.
4. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 13 May 1931.
5. Shiels, ibid.

under the direction of the said Governors, and ended by falling back on the status quo.'[1] Leonard Woolf, the Secretary of the A.C.I.Q., had a more favourable opinion of Shiels, whom he thought a 'hard-headed, liberal-minded, unsentimental Scot, and he was a convinced believer in the necessity of putting into practice the colonial policies worked out by the Advisory Committee and adopted by the party.'[2] Woolf believed that Shiels was dismayed by Passfield's conservatism and his 'masterly inactivity' whenever an opportunity arose to do something different from what Conservative governments and Colonial civil servants had endorsed as safe and sound and 'progressive' for the last half-century.

The A.C.I.Q. tried to influence Drummond Shiels to put their policies into practice. They bombarded him with material concerning injustices to Africans. On 11 February 1930, he wrote a memo for his civil servants asking them to inquire whether the policy in Kenya ensured that 'native' interests were paramount. He had had a great many representations made to him from M.P.s and others in regard to the alleged injustices under which the 'native' people of Kenya were labouring under the present administration - alienation of land, forced labour, excessive taxation, lack of social services, communications and education. C.R. Buxton had given him some material (which Shiels thought he had got from McGregor Ross) and he had also had direct statements from McGregor Ross. While Shiels regarded Leys' criticisms as exaggerated and out of date, he put Ross in a different category and thought his views should be treated with respect.[3]

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1. Diaries, op.cit.,p.233.
2. L. Woolf, op.cit., pp.236-7.
3. C.O. 533/396 File 16010, T. Drummond Shiels Minute, 11 February 1930.

Shiels' request for an investigation by his civil servants was stimulated by a question C.R. Buxton had put down for 12 February 1930 asking whether direct 'native' taxation was spent on direct 'native' services in the reserves, as the Governor had stated. Drummond Shiels asked Buxton to postpone the question while they made enquiries of the Governor. As a result of the enquiries, it was found that the Governor's assertion that every penny of direct 'native' taxation was spent on services in the 'native' reserves was incorrect. This discovery was a result of Shiels' insistence. At first Cosmo Parkinson had stated that the 'upshot is the natives are receiving in direct services of direct concern and benefit to them considerably more than they pay by way of taxation.'[1] The other civil servants agreed with Parkinson but Shiels considered, after examining the figures, that the case was that there was relative unfairness of taxation in Kenya.[2] Passfield, however, minuted that much harm has been done by uncritical repetition of old stories of errors and offences committed in past years, leading to the suspicion that the same attitude among the settlers prevails today. 'He thought that the settlers should be judged by their present deeds!'[3] Shiels spoke to Buxton about the question and it was agreed not to press it but the Under-Secretary stated that he and Lord Passfield were concerned to vet the estimates for the following year to ensure that they showed that 'native' taxation was being spent on the 'natives' and that the 'natives' were not being taxed proportionately more that the whites.

1. ibid., Memo A.C.C. Parkinson, 5.March 1930.
2. ibid., Minute by Drummond Shiels, 15 March 1930.
3. ibid., Minute by Passfield, 20 May 1930.

Passfield received some letters from Governor Grigg emphasising that disaster would follow if 'pro-native' policies were put into effect. Grigg was anxious about the effect of unrest on the Kikuyu province, believing that it was being stirred up by the Indians and communists.[1] He was also seriously concerned about correspondence which was reaching the Kikuyu Central Association from various quarters in England. He was not sure whether it was from Norman Leys or definitely seditious organisations. Grigg acknowledged that Leys was a conscientious man who believed that he was acting in the interests of the 'natives' but Grigg thought that, in reality, Leys was their most dangerous enemy 'for the suggestions he makes to them will inevitably end some day in violence of some kind and the natives will be the greatest sufferers.'[2] Passive resistance to government always led to violence of some kind. Grigg pointed to the example of India where the population was much less virile and primitive than the African population.[3] He was making arrangements for prompt action through motor patrols by the King's African Rifles if any serious trouble threatened. He was worried about the reception given to Kenyatta when he returned to the colony.

Passfield tried to steer a middle course between the policies advocated by Grigg and those advocated by the Labour party's A.C.I.Q. In December 1929, he wrote a long memorandum for the Cabinet, as requested, containing a statement on 'native' policy and a report on the Hilton Young and Wilson reports which it was intended to lay before the Joint Committee of Parliament.[4]

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1. Passfield Papers, correspondence with Grigg, Grigg to Passfield, 11 September 1929.
2. ibid., Grigg to Passfield, 7 December 1929.
3. Passfield and many in the Labour party also thought that the African was far more 'primitive' than the Indian at this time.
4. C.P.360(29) December 1929.

'The Statement on Native Policy' began by quoting the 1923 White Paper that African 'native interests should be paramount.' Passfield expressed complete concurrence with this declaration and went on to consider the development of 'native' resources in the areas of land, labour, production and taxation. The Colonial Secretary reiterated the criticisms of the Kenyan administration that had been put forward by the A.C.I.Q. In conclusion, he stated that the principles that he put forward were not new and it was not intended to imply that they had never been applied, but H.M.G. had judged it important to state in a clear and comprehensive form their attitude towards the question of native policy. 'They are the first to recognise that no statement of policy or principles can by itself achieve results, and that progress must throughout be dependent upon the spirit in which the policy and principles are interpreted by those whose duty it is to give effect to them.'

In the second part of the memorandum, Lord Passfield discussed the schemes for Closer Union. This included a summary of the Hilton Young proposals and Sir Samuel Wilson's Report. In conclusion, this part of the memorandum stated that although the ultimate goal in Kenya might be a civilisation test irrespective of colour, it was not to be expected that the 'natives' would be able to play an effective role in the Government of Kenya at an early date as members of a common electorate embracing all the separate communities. Therefore, in the first stage, the communal framework should be maintained. Passfield was still putting forward a pro-settler point of view.

The Cabinet considered Passfield's proposals at a

meeting on 17 December 1929,[1] when it was decided that a Cabinet Committee should be set up to examine the documents circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies and advise the Cabinet as to the policy they should adopt. The Committee was composed of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Sankey, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Passfield, the Secretary of State for India, Wedgwood Benn, and the Secretary of State for Air, Lord Thomson. It was to consider particularly whether there should be a new officer appointed whose duties would be to supervise Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda and what his functions and powers should be in relation to the three governments which exercised jurisdiction over the area; and, secondly, assuming that such an officer was appointed, what alteration, if any, should be made in the composition of the Kenya Legislative Council.

While the Cabinet Committee was working on the policy for East Africa, the humanitarian lobby was trying to organise pressure to make the Colonial Office pursue a more positive policy of enforcing African interests in East Africa. A Memorial was sent to the Labour Government,[2] expressing dissatisfaction at 'the non-fulfilment of Labour's policy with regard to native races, particularly, in connection with East Africa.' It was signed by 100 signatories, including P. Noel-Baker, A.F. Brockway, J. Horrabin, J.C. Wedgwood, C.R. Buxton, M. Hamilton, E. Wilkinson, A. Salter, G. Strauss, F.W. Jowett, J.Strachey, F. Lee, J. Lee, Rennie Smith, W. Paling, R. Sorensen and D.G. Pole. As well as Labour supporters, some Liberal

1. Cabinet Minutes 53(29) Conclusion 2.
2. Memorial on African Policy, 15 April 1930, C.R. Buxton Papers, Box 5/3.

M.P.s and supporters also signed. The Memorial pointed out that the Labour Government had taken no steps to secure the land rights of the Africans, to alter the restrictive labour conditions, to revise the unjust systemof taxation, to increase the proportion of public expenditure on African areas or to establish equal rights before the law in all African colonies. It urged that the Labour Government should publish a statement of principles, and send instructions to the Colonial Governors to establish these things.

The 'Memorialists' were to be reassured by the proposals of the Cabinet Committee on Closer Union. The Committee reported to the Cabinet in April with a different scheme[1] from the one which Passfield had proposed the previous November. It pointed out that the three territories each had different forms of government, Uganda was a protectorate where the British Government was, more or less, at liberty to do as it liked. Tanganyika was a mandated territory which had to be administered in terms of the Mandate and a small sea-coast strip of Kenya was a Protectorate but the larger part of the territory was a Colony.

The Committee therefore decided that a High Commissioner should be appointed and he should be assisted by a Legislative Council, of which he should be the chairman, consisting of 3 officers on the High Commissioner's staff and 21 members, 7 from each of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. The High Commissioner could require that any measure passed by the Council could be referred to the Secretary of State for the Colonies who could quash the measure or alter it. The duties of the High Commissioner would be that he would

1. C.P.65(30), April 1930.

be the chief adviser on 'native' and other policy to the Secretary of State and he should administer the railways, air and motor services, ports and harbours, customs, defence, post, telegraph and telephone, extradition, central research, the trade and information office in London and any other matter which was placed under his authority.

Concerning the second part of their work; the constitution of the Kenya Legislative Council, the Committee stated that the 'goal of constitutional evolution in Kenya, as elsewhere, is admittedly responsible government by a ministry representing an electorate in which every section of the population finds an effective and adequate voice. But that goal cannot be reached at an early date in a community where it has so far been practicable to enfranchise less than 1 per cent of the population and where the idea of any substantial extension of the franchise finds little general support. For the native African population, indeed, in so far as tribal organisation is still the basis of its social organisation, the most promising line of development for the near future may well lie, not in any direct participation in the Legislative Council but in the increasing importance given to Native Councils.' The Committee decided that the constitution of the Kenya Legislative Council should be substantially unchanged and that the official majority should be maintained. It also thought that with regard to the franchise, the aim should be the establishment of a common roll with an equal franchise of a civilisation or education character open to all. However, there was not sufficient evidence available to say how this could be attained and the Committee recommended that the Cabinet should ask the High Commissioner

to institute an inquiry as soon as he was appointed. The Committee recommended that the Cabinet should give approval to their scheme and the statement on 'native' policy that had been prepared by the Colonial Secretary. The Cabinet discussed the Committee's proposals on 9 April[1] when Passfield spoke against a common franchise and received backing from Thomas who thought that democracy should not be carried 'too far'. Labour's two Colonial Secretaries argued against the implementation of the party's colonial policy. The constitution of the Kenya Legislative Council was referred back to the Committee which reported to the Cabinet on 30 April 1930[2], and it was agreed that the common roll was a long term aim not something for the immediate future. It was decided to approve the report of the Cabinet Committee, subject to certain conditions: they should consult with M.P.s who had made a special study of the subject, the Secretary of State for India should communicate with the Viceroy to ascertain his opinion and it should be stated in the White Paper that the High Commissioner's Council must be of a legislative character for constitutional reasons to avoid giving the impression that the Government had decided the point. The proposals which the Cabinet had endorsed were substantially different from those put forward originally by Lord Passfield and more in line with the criticisms of those proposals which had been put by Wedgwood Benn. Passfield had proposed that the High Commissioner should not be responsible for 'native' policy, that there should be a nominated rather than an official majority on the Kenya Legislative Council and that there should not be a common electoral roll as the

1. Cabinet Minutes 21(30)2a, 9 April 1930.
2. Cabinet Minutes 24(30) 5, 30 April 1930.

Indians were demanding. These proposals were similar to those put forward by Sir Samuel Wilson and might have satisfied the white settlers. As amended by the Cabinet committee, the proposals were that the High Commissioner should be responsible for 'native' affairs, the official majority should remain on the Kenya Legislative Council and the aim should be to establish a common electoral roll but it would not come immediately. These proposals were not likely to find support among the white settlers. The Cabinet Committee had produced a plan more acceptable to those who supported the Africans' interests in Kenya than the plan originally proposed by Lord Passfield with the advice of his civil servants. This plan was to be referred for consideration to the Joint Committee but the 'Memo on Native Policy' was supposed to come into effect immediately.

The Government issued its two White Papers on Africa in June 1930.[1] The 'Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa', which had been mainly written by Lord Passfield emphasised that the Government thought that African interests should be paramount in East Africa. Concerning the Africans' political development, the White Paper stated that maximum use should be made of the opportunities of self-government provided in tribal and local institutions. The 'natives' should be increasingly associated with government through local Native Councils. On the social side, the Government regarded the objective to be achieved as a general improvement in the standard of 'native' life in economic conditions, in home circumstances and in the physical health of men, women and children, together with

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1. 'Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa', Cmd.3573, June 1930. 'Statement of the Conclusions of H.M.G. in the U.K. as regards Closer Union in East Africa', Cmd. 3574, June 1930.

the spread of education in the widest sense.

On the question of land, the White Paper stated that it was the view of H.M.G. that any feeling of insecurity in the 'native' mind in regard to his tribal lands should be finally removed. Land should be available for all the tribes, of such an extent and character, that it would fully suffice for their actual and future needs. Concerning labour, the White Paper declared that H.M.G. attached great importance to the principle that the 'native' should be effectively and economically free to work, in accordance with his own wish, either in production in the Reserves, or as an individual producer upon his own plot of land, or in employment for wages which were freely contracted for.

On taxation, the paper stated that H.MG. considered that the principle to be followed was that the levy of direct taxation on the 'native' should be definitely limited by his capacity to pay such imposts without hardship and without upsetting his customary method of life. On the other side of the picture, it was incumbent upon the Government to ensure that Government expenditure on 'native' services in the annual budget should bear a proper relation to the revenue raised from the 'natives'. In order to ensure this, H.M.G. wanted a statement at the end of each financial year showing 'native' revenue and the amount spent on 'native' services area by area.

Throughout the White Paper, the Colonial Secretary referred to the white settlers as immigrants. This was not the first time that White Papers had described the white settlers in such a way but combined with Passfield's continued emphasis that the interests of the Africans should be paramount, it annoyed the settlers, who regarded themselves

as much more entitled to rule Kenya than the Africans and did not like the implication that the Africans would eventually, although a long time in the future, rule themselves.

The second White Paper, 'The Statement of the Conclusions of H.M.G. in the U.K. as regards Closer Union in East Africa' put forward the policy that had been worked out by the Cabinet Committee. The High Commissioner was to be the chief adviser to the Secretary of State on 'native' policy and, as such, he would receive drafts of bills to be introduced in the Legislative Councils, drafts of each year's budget with full particulars of proposed changes in 'native' taxation and in all forms of welfare work, outlines of all proposed changes in administration affecting the 'natives', copies of all important despatches to or from the Secretary of State, and generally oversee all the Governors' decisions on 'native' policy.

Gupta states that as a result of the Labour Government's policy 'bureaucratic paternalism was reaffirmed against both the settlers and the champions of equal rights'. However, at the time, it appeared that the champions of African rights had won.[1]

The reception which greeted the two White Papers varied from praise from the Labour party and press to outright hostility by the white settlers. The A.C.I.Q. was satisfied with the two papers. Passfield had consulted C.R. Buxton with regard to the White Paper and its proposals seemed in line with those that had been put forward by the Labour party in its pamphlets on the Empire in Africa. The A.C.I.Q. was concerned that the budget of

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1. Gupta, op.cit.,p.186.

Kenya should be carefully considered to see that it was in conformity with the White Paper on Native policy.[1]

Fenner Brockway, who had also been consulted by Lord Passfield, wrote in the 'New Leader' that the Government's statement on East African policy was a welcome advance on the proposals that the Government was understood to have had in mind the previous November. He was disappointed that there was no common roll immediately which would have meant real equality of status. However, he thought that C.R. Buxton had been splendidly active on the question and Frank Horrabin, the I.L.P.'s expert, had missed no opportunity for pressure in Parliament.[2]

Norman Leys wrote in the same paper[3] that thousands of people had known that for nearly a year a battle had been going on in the Colonial Office over the fate of the millions of voteless, and therefore helpless, people in East Africa. He had thought that the white settler lobby would win but he had to admit that he had been wrong. He congratulated Lord Passfield and Dr. Shiels ontheir courage. He thought that the plan for a High Commissioner was sound, although there was a danger in putting so much on one man's shoulders. The paper on 'native' policy was a definite improvement on anything that had gone before and if its directions were acted upon, East Africa would, in a few years, no longer be the reproach to the Empire that it was. The only complaint he had was to point out that in Kenya the 'native' institutions were of European manufacture and would not be a secure basis on which to build for eventual 'native' self-government. The need was deliberately

1. A.C.I.Q. Minutes 17 December 1930.
2. 'New Leader', 27 June 1930, p.8.
3. ibid., p.11.

to educate the younger generation to defend themselves in the world of modern industry that the Europeans had forced them to enter. To invite them to be content with traditional institutions suitable to social conditions irrevocably abandoned was like sending a lad to his first job with the toys of his childhood in his hands. Nevertheless, socialists ought to be grateful that if the British agents in Africa did what the White Papers directed a real start would be made with long overdue reforms.

In another article in the 'New Statesman'[1], Leys declared that the Labour Government had faced up to the minority in Kenya. The only problem was would it insist on its policy. The Governor was on the side of the settlers but there would eventually be volcanic disturbances by the Africans if the policies of the White Papers were not acted upon. The Colonial Office had awakened just in time, and, if it was vigorously supported by public opinion, Kenya might still be made a free country like Jamaica. Leys tried to ensure that the policy of the White Papers was put into effect. He wrote to Buxton to point out that there was no need to worry that the reforms would be annulled by the next government. If the reforms were introduced, the Africans would ensure that they were not revoked.[2] He wrote to Harris[3] to say that they should persuade as many M.P.s as possible to ask questions about the measures being taken to carry out the policy of the 'White Paper on Native Policy'. He thought that the battle in Kenya was only just beginning and would not be finally won until the Colonial Office sent men to Africa who believed in the policy of the White Paper. Leys' main

1. 'New Statesman', 27 September 1930, pp.754-5.
2. N. Leys to C.R.Buxton, 17 June 1931, C.R. Buxton Papers, Box 6, File 2.
3. N. Leys to J.H. Harris, 4 September 1930 A.S.A.P.S. Papers, G.145.

fear was that the other members of the A.C.I.Q. would relax now that the 'right policy' had been outlined by the government but he thought that more effort than ever was needed to ensure that the policy was made effective. He wrote to Ross:[1] "so now we are at this pass. As so often happened in the past, a British Government has laid down the right policy. What reason have we for believing that, this time, for once, it will be acted upon?....Our opponents are confident that they will repeat the victories won in the Union (of South Africa) and Rhodesia. They have unlimited funds, and the instinctive sympathy of all who admire pioneers struggling to introduce sweet and light in darkest Africa. Practically the whole upper and middle classes naturally assume that the English gentlemen who live in Kenya must be the best judges of what ought to be done there...And you propose, and allege that Laski does, to meet this emergency by the cessation of what we have hitherto been doing!.....I certainly don't understand a cease fire when the enemy has every gun in action. My answer is more peas and stronger peashooters."

'The Times' did not view the White Papers in the same light as Norman Leys. It welcomed the decision to appoint a High Commissioner as this would end uncertainty which had been bad for business enterprise. However, it felt that there was 'a certain want of perspective in the emphasis laid upon the paramountcy of native interests.' It felt that the original statement in the 1923 White Paper had been unhappily worded as it gave the impression that a European interest, however important, would always yield to a 'native' interest, however trivial. This was naturally

1. N. Leys to MacGregor Ross, 21 October 1930, Winifred Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.

resented by the Europeans who had ventured their capital and energies in the colony. The editorial thought that it was 'unfortunate' that the White Papers implied that representative government was the ideal in a country which had three entirely different groups of people. It also felt that talk of a common roll did more harm than good. The paper thought that the idea of a Joint Committee was a good one, for a settlement should secure the support of all three parties. 'The worst that can happen is a series of partisan decisions by successive governments.'[1]

In Africa, the publication of the White Papers provoked, according to Margery Perham, 'an outcry which rang from Kenya to the Cape'.[2] The settlers named the papers the 'Black Papers' and were unanimous in regarding the proposals as unacceptable. The settlers, says Elspeth Huxley, particularly disliked the tone of the White Papers. They thought that the impression was given that, for the first time, 'native' welfare was being considered by a high-minded Imperial Government intent on seeing justice done in a colony hitherto insensible to 'native' rights. No mention was made of the part played by white settlement in the development of East Africa.[3] Sir Philip Mitchell, the Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs in Tanganyika, at the time, wrote in his memoirs that the White Paper on Native policy was a naive document, which contained little that had not been said ad nauseam for 5 or 6 years, but it did disclose that those who wrote it had no knowledge at all of how Africans lived. He thought that the paper implied that those on the spot

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1. 'The Times', 20 June 1930.
2. M. Perham, 'Lugard, The Years of Authority, 1898-1945' (London, 1960), p.687.
3. E. Huxley, op.cit., p.277.

could not be entrusted to do their job honestly and effectively.[1] Sir Edward Grigg, confided to M. Perham, who was staying with him at the time, that the White Papers 'have undone finally all I have been striving to build up.'[2] M. Perham thought that the Governor was desperate and the settlers were angry.[3]

The East African press was very hostile to the White Papers. The 'Tanganyika Standard' criticised the doctrine of paramountcy and said that the Imperial Government had failed to realise that white settlement was bound up with, and, was part of, the fabric of these countries and to ignore that was to foredoom any scheme for the future of East Africa to failure. The doubt cast on the settlers' ability to deal justly with the 'natives' was bound to give offence.[4] The 'Mombasa Times' was particularly critical of the Imperial Government's policies. It regarded the White Papers as a challenge which the settlers would have to take up or their position in East Africa would deteriorate.[5]

'The Times of EastAfrica', which had previously been critical of settler policy, thought that with the publication of the White Papers all hope of agreement had disappeared. The Imperial Government had forgotten its own kith and kin who had their homes in East Africa, and gone beyond the realm of wise and practical politics.[6] The only East African paper to support the White Papers was the Indian-owned 'Kenya Daily Mail' which wholeheartedly

1. Sir Philip Mitchell, 'African Afterthoughts' (London, 1954), pp.117-118.
2. M. Perham, 'East African Journey' (London, 1976), p.136.
3. ibid., p.16.
4. 'The Times', 3 July 1930 (which quoted these examples from the
5. 'The Times', 3 July 1930. African press).
6. ibid.

welcomed the declaration of 'native' policy but criticised the Imperial Government for not setting up the common electoral roll immediately.[1]

The Governor of Kenya, Sir Edward Grigg, wrote to the Colonial Secretary[2] on 23 June 1930 that 'your party is by its very nature a party of zealous and militant reformers; and many of them have to learn that there is a very wide and difficult debatable land between the enunciation of political principles and the practical application of those principles to the circumstances of the times. I am sure you will agree that the leaders of the party have had to show much steady and practical statesmanship in picking their way through that debatable land.' 'This may seem a heaven sent moment to extremists and doctrinaires in East African affairs; but they too must learn that European political ideas cannot be applied in a rapid and roughshod manner to Africa without undermining the government and development of complex and difficult territories like this.' Grigg thought that the Labour party was guided on African affairs 'by some such motto as "Africa for the Africans, representative government by rapid stages for the African population and so much the worse for all the other communities." He thought that some of the Labour party's criticisms would be modified by closer knowledge of the colony. Grigg was worried by communications from the Secretary of State which he thought could only be explained by the fact that Passfield found him untrustworthy on the question of 'native' welfare, thinking only of European interests and ignoring the rest. Passfield

1. 'The Times', 3 July 1930.
2. Passfield lost the Dominions Office in June 1930, but remained as Colonial Secretary. Thomas gave up Employment to take over the Dominions.

had given him no indications in their conversations the previous year that he shared the suspicions concerning the administration of Kenya that had been voiced by certain sections in Parliament and a group of able extremists who had always been violently hostile to the Government of Kenya. Grigg ended his letter to Passfield by quoting letters that he had received praising his administration and indicating his fairness to Africans.[1]

After Grigg received the two White Papers, he wrote another letter to Passfield on 30 June 1930.[2] In this he stated that he was very busy and would not be able to produce a detailed memorandum on the papers which could be laid before the Joint Select Committee for some time. His initial comments on the Papers were that they had caused considerable controversy 'not so much because of what they actually contain (although there are points of major importance in them to which the unofficial community will never willingly agree) but because of the manner and the method of their presentation'. The point which had aroused the strongest feeling was the impression that had been given that there was no need to obtain local agreement to any decisions of the Imperial Government. The worst example of this was the Common Roll which could apparently be put into force by the High Commissioner, acting on the instructions of the Secretary of State without agreement of any kind. The 1927 White Paper and the Hilton Young Report had both stressed the necessity of reaching agreement with the local population. The attitude of the Labour government had caused widespread alarm and indignation.

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1. Passfield Papers, Correspondence with Sir Edward Grigg, Grigg to Passfield, 23 June 1930.
2. ibid., Grigg to Passfield, 30 June 1930.

There was also, wrote Grigg, very strong feeling regarding the absence of any reference in the Papers to the desirability of associating the Europeans in Kenya with the trusteeship for the 'native' interests. This had also been emphasised in the 1927 White Paper and the Hilton Young Report. The case had not been argued by the Labour Government, but had just been ignored. Concerning the 'White Paper on Native Policy', Grigg stated that there was universal agreement as to the general principles contained in the document but there was strong exception to broadcasting Papers which would make the 'native' think the Government was called upon to pursue his interests to the exclusion of all others; that was the impression that the Paper gave and it was a very unfortunate one. Grigg also thought that many of the Papers' phrases could not be taken literally as they would mean very wide-spread amendments of existing legislation[1] and this would not be in the 'native' interest. There was a danger in making far-ranging declarations in general terms which could be interpreted practically, in a number of different ways. Grigg thought it essential that these statements should be agreed between the parties in England and their meaning made absolutely clear.

In his letters to Grigg, Lord Passfield emphasised that people in England were worried that the principle of trusteeship was not being carried out in Kenya. On 1 May 1930, he wrote that 'native' administration was attracting an increasing amount of attention in England and, 'to be quite frank, in the case of Kenya, suspicion - particularly in regard to the relations between the natives and the immigrant communities; and the principle of trusteeship makes

1. This was precisely what Leys wanted to happen.

a tremendous appeal to people here. There is nothing new in this. But the change of government which came about a year ago makes a very real difference, and it is reflected at once in the closer supervision which we give to native affairs - not merely in Kenya, but in all the African Dependencies, although Kenya comes in for an exceptional amount of supervision.'[1] Lord Passfield thought that Sir Edward Grigg would be the 'first to agree' that it was the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that 'native' policy in East Africa was in accordance with the views of the Government which was in power in London. In his reply, Grigg declared that he would 'not be the first, but the last, to agree to any principle of the kind, for, so long as the native peoples of East Africa are concerned, it can only mean changes of method, and even of policy with varying Secretaries of State, and sometimes even violent wrenches of the steering-wheel on which this vast shipload of trusting people depends.'[2]

Lord Passfield discussed the White Papers with Sir Edward Grigg in a letter dated 9 July 1930.[3] The Colonial Secretary stated that the Joint Committee would not be set up until the Autumn Session and there was therefore no need to produce a report for it immediately. While Lord Passfield did not expect the settlers to welcome the White Papers, he was surprised at the exception that was taken to the settlers being called immigrants, because, after all, that is what they were and the phrase had been used repeatedly in official documents. As to the general principles of the Paper on Native Policy, there was nothing

1. Passfield Papers, op.cit., Passfield to Grigg, 1 May 1930.
2. ibid., Grigg to Passfield, 30 May 1930.
3. ibid., Passfield to Grigg, 9 July 1930.

revolutionary in it. If there was the will to deal with the practical issues in the spirit that informed the statement, there would not be any serious difficulties. Concerning, Grigg's point that he was continually stressing the 'native' side, the Colonial Secretary wrote that he had done this deliberately because it was essential that the 'natives' should be kept to the fore; if, in any matter, the 'natives' should receive less consideration than the Europeans the Colonial Secretary would feel that he had not done his duty as guardian of the interests of the whole community.

Passfield replied to Grigg's letters of 23 and 30 June on 29 July 1930.[1] He thought that the Governor had over-estimated the extent to which his despatches were influenced by zeal for reform. There were a good many, wrote the Colonial Secretary, who were not likely to let theory get in front of the daily task and who would not under-rate practical difficulties in the Labour party. They had had a long training in administration of one kind or another. The policy that he was putting forward was not the result of extremist pressure; each suggestion was a practical improvement capable of immediate or early adoption, or a step towards a working policy in the future. On the point that the Labour Party was only concerned about the welfare of the African population, Lord Passfield wrote that the uneasiness felt about African questions was not confined to one party and the implication that the Labour party had no regard for the other communities was entirely without foundation. 'As regards the rate at which democratic institutions can be introduced among the African populations,

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1. Passfield Papers, op.cit., Passfield to Grigg, 29 July 1930.

not only in Kenya but elsewhere, there is room for, and actually is, a wide range of opinion. But the governing point is that even if we wish to move slowly we must move, or be pushed.' The Colonial Secretary thought that Sir Edward Grigg had over-rated the objections to what the Government had said as regards the common roll, as it actually asked no more than that what action was practicable in the near future should be explored by the new High Commissioner, if and when, he was appointed. Passfield emphasised the Fabian policy of gradual reform.

There was a difference of opinion between the Governor and the Colonial Secretary. Whereas Grigg felt that 'if the British settler were to fail and degenerate', European civilisation would be brought down with him in his fall,[1] Passfield was trying to explain that both Labour and Conservative Governments had declared that the interests of the Africans should be paramount and that he was only filling in some details. Neville Chamberlain wrote to Grigg telling him to advise the settlers to 'keep a stout heart' and not to think that their case had been lost 'because the old nanny-goat has issued these two White Papers'-soon 'this inane government would be kicked out.'[2]

As a result of Leys' efforts the A.C.I.Q.'s main concern was to ensure that the principles that had been declared would be put into practice. As Margaret Cole writes, 'the policy had to be implemented by thousands of small decisions in hundreds of different area; and here Sidney's innate trust in the 'expert' served him ill.'[3] The A.C.I.Q. tried to put pressure on the Colonial Office to ensure that the policy was being enforced. At meetings

1. Grigg to Passfield, 30 May 1930.
2. M. Perham, 'Lugard', op.cit.,p.688
3. M. Cole, ed., 'B. Webb, Diaries', op.cit., introduction, p.111.

in December 1930 and January 1931, it decided to recommend that the draft budget of the Kenya government should be carefully considered to make sure that it was in conformity with the White Papers.[1]

The A.C.I.Q. was aided by Archdeacon Owen who returned to England from Kenya at the end of 1930 with a copy of the Kenya Estimates for 1931. Owen pointed out that the allocation of funds took no account of the principles of the White Paper. He wrote to Norman Leys that 'the White Paper will die if not freely watered with help at this end.' He suggested that he, Leys and others should go to the Colonial Secretary to point out the discrepancies between the Kenyan budget and the White Paper proposals.[2] The A.C.I.Q. took up Owen's suggestion and decided that Leonard Woolf should try to arrange that a sub-committee of M cGregor Ross, Norman Leys and Archdeacon Owen should see Lord Passfield.[3] After a detailed examination of the Kenyan budget, the A.C.I.Q. found that the proposed expenditure on education and communications was grossly unfair to the Africans. The amount to be voted for the education of white children was enormously higher than that provided for the education of the African children and the proposed expenditure on roads to serve the settlers' estates was far higher than that proposed for roads serving the African reserves. On the other hand, the taxation of Africans was proportionately much more severe than that of the white settlers.

Leonard Woolf and C.R. Buxton eventually went to see Lord Passfield to put these points and ask for a revision

1. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 17 December 1930; 21 January 1931.
2. Archdeacon Owen to N. Leys, 18 November 1930, W. Holtby Papers Drawer 4, File 9.
3. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 4 February 1931.

of the budget. The Colonial Secretary met the chairman and secretary of the A.C.I.Q. in the House of Lords. Leonard Woolf wrote in his memoirs that 'we had an absurd meeting with Sidney in the red and gold Chamber of the House of Lords, which was, of course, completely empty except for the tiny Secretary of State and the humble chairman and secretary of the Advisory Committee sitting one on either side of him. We got, as I expected, nothing out of Sidney, who was an expert negotiator and had at his fingers' ends all the arguments of all men of action for always doing nothing.'[1]

The meeting was reported to the A.C.I.Q. on 18 February 1931.[2] The Committee was disappointed especially since in February of the previous year Drummond Shiels had informed C.R. Buxton that he and Lord Passfield were going to keep a special watch on the next year's budget in order to ensure that the Africans were not unfairly taxed.[3] Norman Leys thought that Passfield was being 'fooled' by the settlers. He thought that land was still being taken from the Kikuyu in Kenya and that Passfield had also been 'humbugged' about forced labour in Uganda the previous year.[4] Leys had always been doubtful about whether the A.C.I.Q. would be able to persuade Passfield to follow Labour policy. In September 1930, he wrote to Harris that 'if we don't make the Jamaican policy safe in Kenya before the next election, Kenya will go the way of all South Africa.'[5] The failure of Woolf and Buxton to persuade Passfield to revise the Kenyan

1. L. Woolf, op.cit.,p.238.
2. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 18 February 1931.
3. Colonial Office 533/595, 16019.
4. N. Leys to J.H. Harris, 2 August 1930, A.S.A.P.S. Papers G.145. N. Leys to J.H. Harris, 19 December 1929,ibid.
5. N. Leys to J.H. Harris, 21 September 1930, ibid.

budget in favour of the Africans and 'grasp the Kenyan nettle', led to Leys' resignation from the A.C.I.Q.[1] He decided to write another book on Kenya to force the public to awareness about what was happening in Kenya. Gupta writes that Leys had some success in persuading his colleagues to accept the equal rights policy.[2] However, Leys did not think that he had achieved enough success in persuading his colleagues to take African affairs seriously. He wrote to Harris in 1931 that 'the Labour party as a whole never seriously addressed itself to the problems of colonial Africa.'[3] He had written to Buxton in December 1930 to beg him to make time to ensure that action was taken on the Kenyan budget - 'if not it will be quite impossible to have the principles of the 'White Paper on Native Policy' given actuality'.[4] Leys felt that Buxton, Ross and the other members of the A.C.I.Q. had not made enough effort to ensure that the policies of the White Papers were carried out. Leys thought that they should have put more pressure on Pasfield but they tended to assume that since the 'right policies' had been outlined, they would be put into effect. Leys wrote to Winifred Holtby, in 1931, that he was exasperated because of 'these two wasted years, not only with Passfield but with Buxton, Ross and the rest of the Advisory Committee who thought that the White Paper would put itself into action - a puerile notion I always thought it.'[5] Leys' criticism of the other members may have been harsh but Leys was right on the main point that if nothing was done to

1. N. Leys to J.H. Harris, 16 July 1931, ibid.
2. P.S. Gupta, op.cit., p.194.
3. N. Leys to J.H. Harris, ibid.
4. N. Leys to C.R. Buxton, 7 December 1930, N. Leys to C.R. Buxton, 26 December 1930, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 9.
5. N. Leys to W. Holtby, 5 September 1931, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.

enforce Labour policy, the 'White Paper on Native Policy' would make no difference to the actual situation in Africa. Leys felt that a confrontation with the settlers could not be avoided; Passfield,on the other hand, was trying to avoid confrontation, if possible.

Passfield stated in the House of Lords[1] that the Government wanted to get the fullest measure of unity on the complicated matter of Closer Union. It believed that the settlers had a part to play in the trusteeship of the Africans, for the settlers were part of the Kenyan Legislative Council and they would be involved in the new Federal Council. He pointed out that the common roll would not be instituted immediately, all the Government wanted was for the High Commissioner to inquire what was the most practicable action that could be taken in this direction. Passfield managed to persuade Lord Lugard to second the motion that

'a Joint Committee of both Houses be appointed to consider the Reports on Closer Union in Africa together with the statement of the conclusions of H.M.G., and to report thereon.'[2] Passfield said that the Government felt that this was the 'best way of getting whatever light and leading can be got on the subject in correction, or supplement, or alteration of the conclusions' which the Government had come to.

Lord Lugard[3] thought that the Joint Committee would prevent the issue becoming the 'shuttlecock of party politics'. It would provide a policy with a sanction 'higher than that of the present Government and, perhaps, higher than that of any Government confined to one party.'

1. 78 H.L.Debs.,5s.,cols.308-312, 3 July 1930.
2. 79 H.L.Deb.,5s., cols. 73-76, 12 November 1930.
3. ibid., cols.76-79

The Joint Committee should attempt to find institutions which were suited to the government of largeAfrican dependencies where parliamentary institutions were not suited. The Archbishop of Canterbury also spoke in support of the motion,[1] saying that he agreed with General Smuts that the 'question of white and black on the Continent of Africa was going to be the most interesting and enthralling problem of the twentieth century.'

Lord Delamere, the leader of the white settlers in Kenya, was visiting London at the time,especially 'to put forward every argument against the subordination of European interests in East Africa'.[2] He spoke[3] in the debate and broke the consensus with a rambling and disjointed speech. He was sorry that the Joint Committee was going to be appointed because he believed that the only possible correct form of government for East Africa was that which had been adopted throughout the South African and East African countries which were governing themselves by a means of self-government. Lord Delamere thought that the settlers should be given control in East Africa.

In the Commons, African policy was discussed on 9 December 1930, when Earl Winterton,[4] a Conservative M.P., moved an adjournment motion. His main concern was to exclude Northern Rhodesia from the principles outlined in the 'White Paper on Native Policy'. He argued that the White Paper had been written with Kenya in mind, therefore it should not apply to Northern Rhodesia which was different from Kenya because it was more industrial and had an

1. ibid., cols.84-87.
2. E. Huxley, op.cit., p.281.
3. 79 H.L.Deb.,5s.,cols.93-95, 12 November 1930.
4. 246 H.C.Deb.,5s.,cols.320-332, 9 December 1930.

increasing population instead of a static population as Kenya had. He wondered whether Northern Rhodesia could be amalgamated with Southern Rhodesia. Winterton believed that the Government's 'White Paper on Native Policy' was too authoritarian. It should realise that it could not carry out a policy of trusteeship without the support of the settlers in East Africa.

Horrabin, however, did not believe that the settlers in Africa could be trusted to look after the welfare of the Africans. He quoted from a document which had been issued by the settlers of Northern Rhodesia which stated "The British colonists there hold that the British Empire is primarily concerned with the furtherance of the interests of British subjects of British race, and only thereafter with other British subjects, protected races, and the nationals of other countries, in that order."[1] Horrabin thought that this rather than the Government's White Paper was an example of an authoritarian document. He defended the Government's Paper and its use of the word 'Paramountcy'. Common justice demanded that the interests of the enormous majority of the people should be paramount and that the interests of 99.5 per cent of the people of Northern Rhodesia should prevail over the interests of the minority.

Charles Buxton[2] quoted the Government's White Paper to show that it did envisage the settlers sharing the responsibility for native welfare: "In short both the Governors and the Councils are regarded by H.M.G. as sharing in the responsibilities for native welfare."[3] He also thought that the document that had been issued by the

1. 246 H.C.Deb.,5s., col.340, 9 December 1930.
2. 246 H.C.Deb.,5s., cols. 348-352, 9 December 1930.
3. Cmd.3573, p.5.

Northern Rhodesian settlers was much more insulting tothe Africans than the Government's WhitePaper was to the European settlers. The Africans had been described as 'alien and barbarous natives' in the settlers' document. Buxton thought that judging by the document they had produced they were not the type of people who could undertake the tremendous responsibility of looking after the welfare of the Africans.

Dr. Drummond Shiels said[1] that he was not in a position to give any information to Earl Winterton about the amalgamation of North and South Rhodesia. There had been a request from the Government of Southern Rhodesia for a conference between the Governments to consider the question but the Government had not yet made up its mind on the subject.[2] Concerning the 'White Paper on Native Policy', Dr. Shiels said that the Paper had been criticised not only in the House but also in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia. It was criticised in Kenya mainly because of its use of the word 'paramountcy' and in Northern Rhodesia and elsewhere on more general grounds. The doctrine of 'paramountcy' had first been declared in the 1923 Devonshire White Paper which had stated that "the primary duty of the Colonial Government is the advancement of the African, and it is incumbent upon them to protect him from an influx of immigrants from any country which might tend to retard his economic development."[3] Drummond Shiels

1. 246 H.C.Deb.,5s., cols.356-365, 9 December 1930.
2. It later decided against the idea, partly because J.F.N. Green pointed out that the African policy of Southern Rhodesia was not in line with the 'White Paper on Native Policy' Gupta,op.cit.,p.187-189. The desire to retain direct British control over the copper deposits was the other major factor. The announcement was made in the House of Commons on 2 July 1931, 254 H.C.Deb.c.1471-3.
3. Cmd.1922,p.18.

could not understand why the Labour Government's 'White Paper on Native Policy' had met with such a hostile reception when other White Papers using similar language and outlining the same policy of 'native' paramountcy had not been accompanied by such hostile criticism. It had been necessary to issue a 'White Paper on Native Policy' because, when the Labour Government came into office in 1929, a doubt existed about the scope and application of the general principles laid down in 1923. Moreover, the Hilton Young Commission had gone into the question of 'native' rights and it was not possible for any Government to avoid making a pronouncement on the issues that Hilton Young had raised. The White Paper applied the principle of paramountcy to the subjects of land, labour and taxation. The 1923 White Paper had only related the principle to the subject of immigration. The relation of the principle to the new subjects had not been criticised in the House; that was the main point. All the criticism had been extremely vague. Dr. Shiels concluded from this that the response of some people was that anything that the Labour Government did, was, ipso facto, designed to ruin the Empire.

However, Shiels thought that the Paper was not universally unpopular in East Africa. Those who knew the Africans best and had no time to take an interest in politics would sympathise with the principles of the White Paper. There were those who held that the African was not capable of sharing the highest civilisation but the Labour party and the Labour Government thought that the African should be given the opportunity of rising to the full height of his possible stature. 'We do not believe that such opportunities are a menace to the true interest of white settlers in our colonies. We are anxious for the

welfare and prosperity of the white settlers. We believe further, that the dual interests of those settlers and the African natives are fundamentally complementary, or if they are not they should be.'[1]

That the Labour Government was not hostile to the concept of Empire was shown in the speeches of Ramsay MacDonald. To delegates of the Imperial Press Conference in London, he said that Empire was a 'lovely word'. He wanted the Empire to embody 'the illumination and aspiration of the human mind. The problem was how to merge the Imperial spirit of rule into the commonwealth spirit of counsel and yet hold out the hand of family helpfulness to the rest of the world.'[2]

The Joint Committee was chosen by Webb and held its first meeting on 4 December 1930. Passfield had changed his mind in response to Conservative criticism, and allowed the Committee to consider the 'Memorandum on Native Policy' as well as the three reports on Closer Union. 'There will certainly be no attempt on my part to prevent the Joint Committee taking the 'Memorandum on Native Policy' into account as fully as it chooses in relation to the powers which are proposed to be given to the High Commissioner, to which it is exactly relevant.'[3] R.G. Gregory[4] sees this decision as the frustration of Passfield's design to exclude the 'Memorandum on Native Policy' from consideration by the Joint Committee. However, in reality, it was another example of Passfield's weakness and vacillation. He was unwilling to insist on the policy

1. 246 H.C.Deb.,5s., col.364, 9 December 1930.
2. 'Daily Herald', 4 June 1930, p.3.
3. 79 H.L.Deb.,5s., col.92, 12 November 1930.
4. R.G. Gregory, 'Sidney Webb and East Africa' (University of California, 1962),p.115.

of the 'Memo' because of the protests of the European community in East Africa and the Conservatives in Britain. The decision to refer the 'Memo' to the Joint Committee meant that 'the doctrine of native paramountcy, as well as trusteeship and dual policy, would be subject once more to review and alteration.'[1] Passfield did not seem determined to carry out Labour's policy. The members of the A.C.I.Q. thought that the 'Memo' should not be discussed by the Joint Committee. Leys thought that the chairman of the Committee should rule 'out of order' decisions which were specified in the 'White Paper on Native Policy' and that the defenders of 'native interests' ought to insist on the retention of the official majority in the Kenya legislature.[2] Leys wrote to Wellock, a Labour member of the Committee, that the 'equal rights' policy should be supported by the Committee rather than the 'indirect rule' policy of Lugard. Leys believed that the Africans were capable of using democratic methods of government. It was no longer possible to satisfy their political aspirations with tribal institutions. The Africans had to have the chance of equal opportunities and status with the whites.[3]

Passfield's choice of members for the Joint Committee made it unlikely that Leys' policies would be adopted. Passfield again demonstrated his lack of determination to insist on Labour policy and ensure it was carried out. Its twenty members were to be selected in equal proportion from the two Houses of Parliament and from the two leading political parties. Ten were selected from the Lords and ten from the Commons. The members from the Commons

1. ibid.
2. N. Leys to J.H. Harris, 15 September 1930, A.S.A.P.S. Papers, G.145.
3. N. Leys to W. Wellock, 27 June 1931, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 9.

represented a balance between the two parties but those from the Lords were predominantly Conservative, and as a result the tone of the Commission was Conservative. The Committee refused to hear the African representatives of the Kikuyu Central Association, J. Kenyatta and P.G. Mockerie, telling them that they had arrived too late, even though the examination of witnesses continued for many weeks after they arrived.[1] However, it did listen to the 'official native' witnesses. Lord Olivier was impressed by the quality of these witnesses and thought that they had emerged with credit from the proceedings and shown that Africans were able to speak for themselves. He felt that the Committee had not emerged with the same credit because some of the questions put to the Africans had been silly.[2]

The Committee reported on 12 October 1931, after the fall of the Labour Government.[3] It devised a form of words to satisfy everyone over paramountcy and upheld the status quo by deciding against any form of Closer Union. On the question of paramountcy the Report stated that 'the principle of paramountcy was intended in 1930 as in 1923 to meet those particular cases which might arise, especially in connection with land and labour questions, in which there might be a definite conflict between the interests of a non-native community and those of the native population.' It meant 'no more than that the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population should not be subordinated to those of a minority belonging to another

1. P.G. Mockerie, 'An African Speaks for his People' (London, 1934), pp.12-13. J. Kenyatta, 'Facing Mount Kenya' (London, 1938), p.47.
2. 'New Statesman', 16 May 1931, p.417.
3. Joint Select Committee Report, H.C. Paper 156 (1931).

race,however important in itself.'[1] Concerning trusteeship the Committee decided that 'trusteeship of natives must remain the function of H.M.G. but that the assistance of the non-native communities in carrying out this obligation should be encouraged to an increasing extent.' The Committee endorsed the policy of trusteeship rather than Leys' ideas of 'equal rights' .It also decided that the time was inopportune for giving effect to any farreaching scheme for Closer Union.The issue was shelved and the situation was left as it was.The settlers had originally hoped that Closer Union would be a means of gaining more political control over the colonies.However,by 1931 they had turned against the idea and were not disappointed with the Report.They had been afraid that the Labour party's scheme for Closer Union would be put into effect with a High Commissioner for 'native policy' who would be determined to enforce 'native paramountcy' over the settlers.They were relieved that this type of scheme was not to be implemented.

Lord Passfield,however,wrote to his wife on completion of the Report:'We finished our African Report today,leaving it to the Chairman finally to tidy up. It has been really a triumphant success for the 'pro-natives' as against the settlers...This is a very satisfactory outcome for the past two years.'[2] Drummond Shiels thought that the Report and the working out of its recommendations would provide a breathing-space.He believed that the Report showed a progressive spirit and provided an opportunity to build up an enlightened political and administrative system in Africa.[3]The Report didnot

1.Joint Select Committee Report,op.cit.,p.31.
2.Quoted Gregory,op.cit.,p.136.
3.Political Quarterly,Vol.3 No.1,Jan- March,1932,pp.71-87.

recommend anything very concrete except that there should be more investigations into the loss of 'native' land, taxation and the administration of justice in Kenya.

Lord Olivier thought that the Report closed the chapters of the 'East African comedy'. The plan for Closer Union had been inspired by the settlers' ambitions to establish in East Africa the paramountcy of British interests, enhance the importance of the Governor of Kenya, install a self-governing white community of Kenya as the dominant authority for general policies throughout the territories and preclude the Labour Government from restoring Tanganyika to Germany. The Report of the Joint Committee had ended the idea of Closer Union and was a sufficient basis for a more loyal administration of Britain's trust for East Africa. It rested with the Colonial Office to make good this declaration of parliamentary will.[1]

In his book, 'A Last Chance in Kenya', Norman Leys wrote that he was disappointed with the performance of the Labour Government and 'the deplorable decision of the Select Committee to refuse to hear the delegates chosen and sent, at the cost of great sacrifices by the Africans themselves', though it had listened to delegates chosen by the Government. This must have added many to the number of those in Kenya who suspected that British promises were not intended to be fulfilled. More than all else, it was the knowledge that the Kenya Government had been directed in the 'White Paper on Native Policy' to do some of the things that the Africans had most ardently wished for, and yet had done nothing to fulfil these directions, that had done so much to silence those who had advocated

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1. 'New Statesman', 14 November 1931, p.614.

patience and encourage those who advocated resistance.[1] Leys wrote to Shiels to say that readers of his book would realise that 'during these two years the C.O. made no real effort to fulfill any of these promises' but the blame lay with Lord Passfield not Shiels. He wrote 'I believe, knowing what your public record is, that you would have followed a very different course if you had been Secretary of State'.[2]

The demands of Jomo Kenyatta and P.G. Mockerie were published in the 'New Leader'. They felt that unless Africans were on the Legislative Council in adequate numbers there was no safeguard for them. Owing to the lack of direct African representation the social, health and educational services were neglected. There were no facilities for marketing African produce - very few roads and no railways served the African reserves - and African produce was decreasing. The roads which were made were constructed by forced labour and the K.C.A. strongly protested against this. They were prepared to approve the appointment of a High Commissioner to supervise economic services only if the principles of the paramountcy of African interests and undivided trusteeship were upheld, uniformity was maintained with the general principles of labour policy, expenses of Closer Union were defrayed by the Government, representation of African interest was granted to Africans themselves and the High Commissioner put 'British Imperial Native policy' into force and in the event of failure reported his reasons to the British

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1. N. Leys, 'A Last Chance in Kenya' (London,1931),pp.12-13
2. N. Leys to Dr. Shiels, 25 September 1931, Winifred Holtby Papers Drawer 4, File 9.

Imperial Government.[1] The Labour Government had failed to satisfy these African demands. Despite the rhetoric of the White Papers, African services were not improved.

Drummond Shiels defended the Ministry, of which he was a part, in a review of Leys' book.[2] He thought that Leys had forgotten that Lord Passfield was 'personally and almost entirely' responsible for the famous 1930 'White Paper on Native Policy'. The real difference between the Labour ministers and Leys was that the ministers had thought it wise to try to get the sympathy and interests of the settlers, while Leys considered this unnecessary or impossible. The ministers believed that some common ground could be discovered and Shiels thought that they had not been disappointed as the unanimous report of the Joint Committee showed.

The main point of Leys' criticism was that the declared policy was the correct one but that the Colonial Office had not been ready to force the Colonial Governments, especially in Kenya, to put it into effect. Norman Leys felt that Shiels review of his book was 'childish in its refusal to see that the Labour Government's two years had left things there (East Africa) worse than it had found them'.[3]

Passfield had difficulty in getting Grigg to carry out his orders. They had clashed on a number of occasions before the issue of the White Papers - the release of Harry Thuku, the controversy over the K.C.A., the Native Lands Trust Bill, the Maragua-Tana power scheme development, and the Kenya Defence Ordinance. Passfield had thought

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1. 'New Leader', 31 July 1931, p.5.
2. Political Quarterly, Vol.3, No. 3, July-September 1932, pp.444-8.
3. N. Leys to Winifred Holtby, Holtby Papers, 24 January 1933, Drawer 4, File 8.

that Harry Thuku should be released but Grigg was not prepared to do this.[1] Over the K.C.A., the Governor was alarmed at its development and wanted to take action to restrict it, but the Colonial Secretary had written that the Governor should refrain from oppressive action until sedition had been brought out into the open. Grigg had drafted a bill banning fund collection by the K.C.A. but Passfield would not let him introduce it. Passfield wrote to Grigg that 'we cannot possibly agree to anything which can be interpreted as repression'.[2] Shiels, however, was not sure that Grigg was carrying out the Labour Government's instructions concerning the K.C.A. and wanted Passfield to recall Grigg but Passfield was unwilling to take this action.

Concerning the Native Lands Trust Bill, which provided security of tenure of the land of the natives in the reserves and defined how reserve land could be appropriated by the government or leased to private individuals, Grigg was forced by Passfield to make amendments which were objectionable to the settlers - the duration of a leasehold to private individuals was limited to 33 years rather than the 99 Grigg had proposed and whenever the Government appropriated land from the natives, it was required to give in return a piece of land similar in area and fertility. The Native Lands Trust Bill had been heavily criticised by the Labour party when in opposition, and Passfield was therefore under a strong obligation to amend it. The 'Daily Herald' reported that Passfield's amendments had created a storm in the Legislative Council. It

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1. Grigg to Passfield, 15 March 1930.
2. Grigg to Passfield, 11 September 1929, Passfield to Grigg, 1 May 1930;

stated that 'all who had the welfare of the East African tribesman at heart were looking with keen interest for the next move on the part of the Imperial Government. There were dangers of the voortrekker South African policy being pursued in Kenya'.[1] The Bill, as amended, encountered strong opposition in the Legislative Council from the unofficial members and the Governor, on Passfield's instructions,[2] reluctantly had to use the official majority to secure its passage.[3] M. Perham who was staying with Grigg at the time, writes that Grigg was on the side of the settlers and thought that 'distrust from home was poisoning the whole atmosphere in Kenya'.[4] Passfield had put him in a ridiculous position and Grigg had been very near to resigning.

On the question of the power scheme, Passfield demanded that the Government make concessions to the Africans who were going to be dispossessed of their land and asked for the appointment of a special tribunal of investigation. This irritated the Governor.[5] Finally, the Kenya Defence Force Ordinance called for compulsory military service for young Europeans. In the Colonial Estimates for 1930, Passfield, to Grigg's annoyance, disallowed the provision that allocated funds for the maintenance of the force.[6]

The difficulties Passfield experienced in trying to persuade Grigg to follow Labour's policy in these instances showed that it would be even more difficult to put the White

1. 'Daily Herald', 16 January 1930.
2. Passfield to Grigg, 1 May 1930; Grigg to Passfield, 23 June 1930.
3. G. Bennett, 'Kenya' (London,1963),pp.69-70.
4. M. Perham 'East African Journey' (London,1977),p.29.
5. Grigg to Passfield, 13 September 1929.
6. Grigg to Passfield, 15 March 1930.

Paper into effect. Grigg did not frame the many amendments which would have had to be made if the 'White Paper on Native Policy' was to be put into effect. He procrastinated about providing considered comments on the Papers for the Joint Committee and Passfield's and Grigg's correspondence was reduced in the end to quibbling about rumours that the Governor had opened the sealed package containing the White Papers before the day appointed for opening.[1]

Drummond Shiels wrote that Passfield lacked 'a certain potential ruthlessness' which has to be within the capacity of those with the highest responsibilities. 'A certain Governor - a man of experience and distinction - committed two serious breaches of discipline, one of them openly and the other - more serious in its consequences - only known to a very small circle. These were matters concerning Government policy. Although it was urged on Webb that this very individualistic and almost defiant Governor should be recalled, he refused to do it.'[2] However, Grigg was due to retire at the end of 1930 anyway, so Passfield probably did not think that a few months would make much difference.

Grigg's successor, Sir Joseph Byrne, had been Governor of Sierra Leone and a policeman in the troubles in Ireland. It was thought that he would not be as keen to look after the settlers' interests as Grigg had been.[3] C.R. Buxton wrote to Byrne to point out that the Kenyan administration needed to be brought more into harmony with the 'Memorandum on Native Policy' and that the degree of control secured by the white community was 'somewhat greater than it should be.'[4]

1. Grigg to Passfield, 19 November 1930; Passfield to Grigg, 21 November 1930.
2. Shiels op.cit.,p.218
3. G. Bennett, op.cit.,p.73.
4. C.R. Buxton to Sir J. Byrne, 21 May 1931, C.R. Buxton Papers Box 5/3.

Byrne's reply was disappointing to Buxton and the A.C.I.Q.: he wrote that Kenya was dominated by the 'appalling financial depression' and this hampered any endeavour 'to tackle, as one would like, the many problems affecting the native population.'[1] Leys thought that conclusive proof that Byrne belonged to the Grigg school was that Byrne had stated that he hoped that Kenya would be kept out of the limelight in the future. Leys felt that this indicated that Byrne was not keen to implement the 'Memorandum on Native Policy', for, if it were implemented, Kenya would definitely have to be kept in the limelight.[2] It seems that Byrne was not as determined to uphold the settlers' interests as Grigg had been, but, on the other hand, he was not prepared to confront the settlers and enforce the principles of the 'Memo'.

Passfield was also not willing enough to confront the settlers in Africa and make it plain to them that the interests of the Africans would be paramount. He failed to point out clearly that the Africans would eventually be responsible for their countries. When he was Dominions Secretary, he approved an act from the Southern Rhodesian Legislature which made the situation of the Africans worse. He approved a segregation policy which divided Southern Rhodesian land between white settlers and the Africans. The act withdrew the right of Africans in Southern Rhodesia to purchase land in any part of the country, as they had previously been entitled to do, and imposed a segregation policy. Passfield had followed the advice of his civil servants without thinking through

1. Sir J. Byrne to C.R. Buxton, 22 June 1931, ibid.
2. N. Leys to Owen, 29 January 1931, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 9.

the implications of the measure. The A.C.I.Q. had not paid much attention to the matter, the only criticism of the decision coming from the A.S.A.P.S.[1]

Passfield's 'Memorandum on Native Policy' could have made a difference in Africa, particularly, East Africa, if he had been determined to enforce its principles. However, as the episode of the Kenyan budget showed, he lacked the necessary determination. Sir Edward Grigg and the settlers had been very worried when the White Papers appeared: they feared that they would be enforced, but as Passfield procrastinated and set up the Joint Committee, dominated by Conservatives, they realised that their position was not in danger. Passfield did not order the amendment of all legislation which broke the principles of the 'Memo'. He did not ensure that the budgets were altered so that the principles would be carried out. Instead, Passfield contented himself with setting up the Joint Committee, and considered making yet more inquiries into the situation in East Africa. The call for more enquiries was reinforced by the report of the Joint Committee, and enquiries were set up, as a result, into land, taxation, and the administration of justice in Kenya, by Passfield's successor as Colonial Secretary.[2] Passfield's White Papers became, as Sir Edward Grigg said later, 'the obiter dicta of a minority Government without Parliamentary ratification.'[3] Sir Donald Cameron, a Governor who thought differently to Grigg, considered that Passfield was 'utterly useless, vacillating and weak' as Colonial

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1. Shiels, op.cit., p.204; Gupta, op.cit., pp175-179.
2. J. Thomas followed Passfield as Colonial Secretary in August 1931 but was soon replaced by Sir P. Cunliffe-Lister in November 1931.
3. Quoted, R.G. Gregory, op.cit., p.137.

Secretary. Cameron called him 'Lord Passover'.[1] As a result of Passfield's period of office, the situation in East Africa remained more or less the same as it had been before he came into office. The settlers had not achieved their aim of gaining increased control over the Kenyan Legislative Council but neither had the Labour Government's stated policy, that the interests of the Africans should be paramount, been enforced. The fact that the settler scheme for Closer Union was not put into operation was not due to Passfield. He had been persuaded by his civil servants, when he came into office, to follow the essentials of the Closer Union scheme which had been worked out by his Permanent Secretary, Sir Samuel Wilson. This scheme would have been acceptable to Grigg and the settlers. After talking to Passfield, Grigg went back to Kenya convinced that Passfield would carry out Wilson's plan. The hostility that the White Papers received from the settlers and Grigg was partly caused by the fact that they felt that Passfield had changed his mind. The change had been caused by the protests that Passfield had received when it was realised what he was proposing to do. It was not only the A.C.I.Q. which protested against his original plans, but the A.S.A.P.S., Lord Lugard, Oldham and many Labour and Liberal M.P.s. The protests were not confined to the left of the Labour party but included the humanitarian lobby and many Liberals. Passfield was defeated, in Cabinet, largely as a result of opposition from Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary

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1. M. Perham, 'East African Journey' (London, 1976), p.45.
2. J.C. Wedgwood, op.cit., p.205.
3. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 205, February 1939.

of State for India.[1] However, the Cabinet Committee's alternative scheme for Closer Union, which emphasised African interests, was abandoned as a result of the report of the Conservative-dominated Joint Committee on Closer Union, which Passfield had appointed.

In East Africa, Passfield failed to ensure that African interests would be paramount. The Government's attitude to West Africa will now be considered to ascertain whether West Africa was the example of successful colonial administration that Labour policy statements made it out to be.

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1. R.G. Gregory, op.cit., over-estimates Passfield's zeal on behalf of the Africans and under-estimates Wedgwood Benn's influence. This is because he was unable to look at Cabinet and Colonial Office Papers which plainly show that Passfield was very willing to follow the advice of his civil servants and did not seem very keen on implementing Labour's declared African policy.

CHAPTER 7.

THE SECOND LABOUR GOVERNMENT - WEST AFRICA

West Africa did not take up as much of the Colonial Office's time as East Africa.At this time the problems of the West Coast of Africa were less complex than those of the East.The problems of West Africa were not held important enough to come before the Cabinet. Since the climate of West Africa was unsuitable for European settlement the problem of reconciling the interests of the Africans and the resident Europeans did not arise in the acute form which it took in East Africa,particularly in Kenya. The Colonial Office was generally content to leave these Dependencies to their own devices unless a crisis arose.The situation did not change with the advent of a Labour Government. However,during the period of the Second Labour Government,when Lord Passfield was Colonial Secretary, there were some incidents involving the use of force against some Africans in West Africa. The way in which the Colonial Office handled these situations,when Lord Passfield was Colonial Secretary, shows that the Labour Government had no great desire to push through radical reforms in the interests of the Africans.

In its pamphlets dealing with the empire in Africa,[I] the Labour Party continually pointed out the contrast between the policies pursued by the administrations in East and West Africa. The 'African' policy pursued in West Africa favoured the preservation of African rights to land,and assisted the African population to develop the resources of the land by growing crops or gathering products for exports. In contrast,the 'capitalist' policy

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I. 'The Empire in Africa:Labour's Policy (I920),
'Labour and the Empire:Africa (I926).

pursued in East Africa favoured the economic development of the country through syndicates and planters by the use of 'hired' or forced labour. It confined that population to reserves and gave the African population no security of title even within the reserves. As Margery Perham writes,[1] 'the sole credit for this position (in West Africa) cannot be attributed to official altruism or foresight. Governments staffed with the same material and directed by the same Colonial Office have in other parts of the continent facilitated the alienation of land to white colonists even where it was occupied by natives.' Colonisation in West Africa was never considered mainly because of the 'dreadful climate' but also because, from the point of view of the government, the Treasury and the traders, it was a relatively sound economic proposition from the start. There was no need for settlement in order to make profits. Talking about the plantation system, the chairman of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce said, concerning West Africa, 'I went to say that I know no responsible official or trader who advocates that system. We are all dead against it as well as the alienation of land from the natives.'[2]

Some left-wing writers did not view the West African colonies in the same light as the Labour party. Ralph Fox, a Marxist, thought that the 'whole economic life of the West African colonies' was 'under the control of the great oil and cocoa trusts of which Unilever and British Chemical Industries' were the most prominent.[3] It was these trusts which fixed the prices for palm-oil and cocoa

1. M. Perham, 'Native Administration in Nigeria', (Oxford, 1937)
2. 'West Africa', 24 April 1926, p.486.
3. R. Fox, 'The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism', (London, 1938), pp.88-89.

and they had an absolute monopoly over the whole internal trade of the colonies. In 1929 the African and Eastern Trade Corporation Limited and the Niger Company Limited, subsidiary of the larger British firms, merged. The result of this merger was that the four crown colonies of West Africa - Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Gambia and Sierra Leone - were virtually for all commercial purposes in the hands of a single combine named United Africa Company Limited. Fox also thought that the land system in West Africa was not as beneficial to the Africans as the Labour party thought. The land systems were extremely complicated but 'none resembled any known system of peasant proprietorship. In some cases local chiefs had been made into landlords, in others a whole class of new landlords had been created who either exploited the peasantry directly through the wage system or else on the share-cropping system. While in Northern Nigeria, native landlordism was growing very rapidly and with it money-lending'.[1]

The incidents that occurred in West Africa, during the period of the Second Labour Government, indicated that the Labour party's idealistic picture of West Africa as a haven of peace and security for the Africans was not altogether accurate. The gravest crisis occurred in Nigeria in 1929. On 11 December 1929 rioting broke out at Aba, government offices were attacked, premises of European merchants, the Niger Company, were looted and the local branch of Barclays Bank was wrecked.[2] The unusual factor about the riots was that they were mainly caused by women. The women were

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1. R. Fox, op.cit.,pp.91-92.
2. 'West Africa', 28 December 1929, p.1772: 'The Times', 25 August 1930.

dissatisfied with the low prices obtained for their palm-oil produce from the Niger Company and they feared that they were going to be taxed. They had recently been counted and they feared that this was a prelude to their being taxed. They persisted in this belief despite repeated assurances to the contrary by the officials who said they were only being counted for census purposes. This was not believed because previously the men had been counted, the same reason being given at the time, and subsequently they were taxed. There was also dissatisfaction with the Native Court system, which was corrupt in many cases. The women had persuaded themselves that they were 'not only the victims of outrageous oppression but were faced with absolute ruin.'[1]

Troops were brought in and there was firing on thirteen occasions. On 14 December at Aba three women were killed and one wounded. On 15 December at Utu Etam Ekpo a Lewis gun was used and 20 women were killed and 25 wounded. The following day, 16 December at Opobo 31 women were killed; one man was also killed and 29 women were wounded. In all 54 women and one man were killed and there were over 50 wounded.[2] The women seemed to have been convinced that no harm would be done to them.[3] Their aim was to destroy the Native Courts and mob the Warrant Chiefs rather than carry out looting.[4] One of the officers in charge of the troops, Lieutenant Browning reported: 'In my opinion firing was necessary and the only way of stopping the rushing crowd.

1. M. Perham, op.cit.,p.216.
2. Report of the Aba Commission, Government of Nigeria, Sessional Paper No. 28 of 1930,p.6: 'The Times', 25 August 1930, p.5.
3. M. Perham, op.cit.,p.213.
4. ibid., p.208.

It was controlled and, directly the crowd had stopped, the firing stopped.'[1] The District Officer for the Abakaliki Division, L.H. Shelton, thought that had action not been taken when it was there was little doubt that 'the Ibeagus would have risen and been joined by the other sections of the Ezzi clan. With them very possibly would have come in the Ekwo clan, and more than 150,000 people might have been involved and the government engaged in a major military operation.'[2]

Fines were imposed on the district of Aba, amounting in all to £7,087, £1,000 of which was on the township of Aba; £850 of this amount was imposed on the African township. The rest of the fine, £6,087, was imposed on the outlying African villages.[3] These fines themselves were reduced from the original amount so as 'to preclude any possibility of their having a crippling amount on the taxpayer.'[4] What fines eventually were paid is open to some doubt; the Governor was asked to discriminate between the innocent and the guilty which he said he was doing.[5] Questions were asked in the House of Commons about the fines.[6] Drummond Shiels emphasised that the fines were not crippling and not unfair.

The Governor, Graeme Thomson, appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of W. Birrell Gray to apportion the responsibility for loss of life where firing had taken place.

1. Report on the Shooting at Abak and Utu Etim Ekpo, 16 December 1929, Lieutenant Browning in C.O. 583, File 706/2 (C.O.583:169).
2. Report of District Officer, Abakaliki Division, 15 January 1930 ibid.
3. Governor of Nigeria, G. Thomson to Passfield, 3 August 1930, C.O.583, File 706/3 (C.O. 583:169)
4. ibid.
5. 'The Times', 11 June 1930: Thomson to Passfield ibid.
6. House of Commons Reports, 29 January 1930.

The report was completed by February 1930 and stated that 'we are quite satisfied that the firing was fully justified in each instance'.[1] The officers responsible for the firing were completely exonerated of all blame. The Governor wrote to Lord Passfield, saying that he was 'personally not prepared to blame the officers concerned.'[2] However, it was generally felt that the serious nature of the disturbances warranted a more representative Commission with wider terms of reference.[3] Thomson wrote to Passfield that he in no sense should be regarded as repudiating or setting aside the findings of the Birrell Gray Commission which he generally accepted. The new Commission, the Kingdon Commission, which he had appointed was of much wider scope and wouldddeal mainly with the origin and causes and prevention of a recurrence of the riots, though no subject connected with the riots would be beyond its purview.[4]

The Colonial Office seemed to think that the whole affair had been handled in a 'satisfactory manner', and the Colonial Secretary was urged to commend the officers for the action they had taken.[5] Drummond Shiels generally agreed with this approach but hesitated to commend anybody 'in connection with this unfortunate affair until we have the report of the larger enquiry'.[6] Lord Passfield, however, commented that we may say that 'the officers acted correctly in deferring the use of force until all

1. Government of Nigeria, Sessional Paper 12 of 1930,p.13.
2. Governor Thomson to Passfield, 3 February 1930, C.O.583 File 706/2 (C.O. 583:169).
3. M. Perham, op.cit., p.214-215.
4. Thomson to Passfield, 3 February 1930,C.O.583,File 706/3.
5. Minutes, 4 February 1930, 27 February 1930, C.O.583 File 706/2.
6. Minute 8 March 1930 ibid.

peaceful means of restoring order had been exhausted.'[1] The Colonial Office seemed to be hoping that the affair would die down. However, the Report of the Kingdon Commission was not as the Colonial Office hoped it would be. It was handed to the Governor on 3 August 1930 and published on the 23 August. One of the civil servants wrote that they were in for trouble as a result of the Report.[2] The main finding of the Kingdon Commission was that on two out of the three occasions in which there was firing which led to death, the firing was unjustified. Only on the third occasion at Opobo was the firing justified, according to the Commission, and then it was only justified at the moment at which it took place but there was no justification for having allowed the situation to reach such a climax.[3] The Commission found that the Africans had been worried about taxation and the falling prices they were receiving for their produce. A contributory cause was discontent with the Native Court members. Margery Perham thinks that the 'presence of Africans on the Commission and in the Legislative Council, and the need of satisfying a large literate African public undoubtedly promoted' the 'sympathetic handling of the rioters' case'. She writes that the Commission and its activities 'probably helped to prevent a wedge of bitterness and distrust being driven between the government and the people'.[4] The Commission suggested that there should be an enquiry into the Native Court system in the disturbed areas and administrative officers should be relieved of some of their judicial work.[5]

1. Minute 10 March 1930 ibid.
2. Minute 23 March 1930 ibid.
3. Sessional Paper 28 of 1930, op.cit., p.6.
4. M. Perham, op.cit., p.215.
5. Sessional Paper 28 of 1930, op.cit., p.125.

The 'Morning Post' thought it was extraordinary that the Commission should have declared that any firing was unjustified. It put its findings down to its unsatisfactory personnel and methods. It had not included any military expert and it had cross-examined 'native' witnesses in a most unsatisfactory manner.[1] A more considered view was that of 'West Africa', which thought that the policy, not the individual officer, was at fault. 'The real point of the whole matter is the broad question of policy laid down from Lagos and not of the responsibility or otherwise of individuals bound amid many difficulties to carry out that policy.' There could be no artificial 'northernisation' of the South East Provinces. There could be no indirect rule through great rulers of groups, for none such existed, nor could they be created without serious harm to local society.[2] 'West Africa' stated that the three main causes of the riots had been the head tax on males, the fear of taxation on women and the low price obtained for the produce of the country. To people who lived in the bush, a tax of 7 shillings a year for males constituted a hardship. 'Taxation has undoubtedly caused hardship, the great drop in the price paid for the produce has accentuated hardship, but the method of administration adopted has been an oppression.' The system known as indirect rule had not worked in S.E. Nigeria. It required strong 'native' chiefs. An attempt had been made to adopt this system in the province over the previous two years, but it had been found wanting. The chiefs, who had been given the power to collect taxation, had often used it to 'get rich quick'. The administrators

1. 'Morning Post', 26 August 1930.
2. 'West Africa', 8 November 1930, p.1589.

had become out of touch with the people. Europeans should learn the 'native' languages and devote more time to finding out their grievances.[1] A reply to this article was written by M.D.W. Jeffreys, who wrote that, although there was great population, there was also great wealth and it was 'nonsense' to say that it was a hardship to pay roughly sixpence a month. The average annual wealth of the native was 426/-, out of which they were only asked to pay 7 shillings.[2]

The Colonial Office thought that the affair had shown that it was more difficult to make indirect rule work in the south East than in the North. Drummond Shiels minuted that he was confirmed in his doubts about indirect rule and native courts. 'The search for the 'natural leaders' of the people has something of pathos in it.' He hoped that the new Governor, Sir Donald Cameron, could make indirect rule work for he did seem to understand the 'native' mind, which, after all, was very like any other mind and reacted to the same influences.[3]

It was decided that Lord Passfield would issue a White Paper on 'the native unrest in Calabar and Owerri Provinces in December 1929 and the correspondence arising out of the report of the Commission'. This appeared in February 1931.[4] It took the form of a despatch to the Officer Administering the Government of Nigeria, Mr. S. Hemmant, who was in control until the new Governor, Sir Donald Cameron, arrived in Nigeria. Lord Passfield thought that it was unfortunate that two commissions should

1. 'West Africa', 8 March 1930.
2. C.O. 583, File 706/3, op.cit.,
3. C.O. 583, File 1003, Minute 12 January 1931 (C.O. 583:176). Sir Donald Cameron was transferred from Tanganyika to Nigeria in 1931.
4. Cmd. 3784.

have been appointed which, to some extent, covered the same ground and examined the same witnesses. 'So far as the personal responsibility of those officers and others directly concerned with the events of November and December 1929 is involved, this second investigation conveys an unfortunate, but inevitable appearance of, so to speak, "trying" them a second time.'[1] On the behaviour of the officers concerned, Lord Passfield thought that their task was not 'an easy or an enviable one' and that 'having regard to all the circumstances, I am definitely unwilling to investigate further the actual measure of praise or blame which should attach to the officers who took the decision to send for troops, or to open fire...and still less am I prepared to say that on any given occasion firing was unnecessary.'[2] Here Lord Passfield was overruling the Report of the Aba Commission which had said that firing was unnecessary on two out of the three occasions on which it led to loss of life.

On the wider causes of the riots, the Colonial Secretary thought that it was 'probably premature and injudicious to introduce into these Provinces a system of direct taxation without first completing a more intensive survey of their social organisation'.[3] It was clear that comparatively little was known of large portions of the South East Provinces. In the circumstances it would probably have been better if the introduction of direct taxation could have been started at lower rates and the people would have been more reconciled to the taxation if they had seen some improvement in the local services.

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1. Cmd. 3784 (February 1931), p.3.
2. ibid., p.4.
3. ibid., p.4.

The government could not have foreseen the fall in the price of the local produce which, naturally, would increase the irksomeness of any tax in a population, living mainly by the sale of such produce. How far discontent with the Native Courts and accusations of corruption and bribery against the Warrant Chiefs may have been definite factors was more obscure, thought Lord Passfield. However, one thing that was clear was that direct taxation had been introduced among a population of whom comparatively little was known, in contrast with the Northern and South West Provinces, and that the subsequent unhappy events depended on this first step. 'It appears to me useless to pursue the subject further.'[1]

Lord Passfield decided against an enquiry into the Native Courts, as he had been recommended by the second Commission. Neither did he think it was necessary to organise the Royal West African Frontier Force, the Nigeria Regiment, in a different way (the Commission had recommended special training in crowd dispersal). 'If soldiers are called upon, it must be to act as soldiers, and to enforce the maintenance of law and order by the threat and, if necessary, the use of lethal weapons.'[2] The changes that Lord Passfield thought necessary were that early consideration should be given to the establishment of local native councils, not necessarily formed by direct popular election, but constituted on as democratic a basis as may be found possible, and that steps should be taken to improve and increase the amount of instruction in anthropology imparted to newly-appointed administrative officers. It was of supreme importance for the District

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1. ibid., p.6.
2. ibid., p.7.

Officer to keep in direct personal touch with his people. This White Paper is a remarkable document for a Labour Colonial Secretary to have written. Lord Passfield takes his officials' views on almost every question and is not prepared to say that firing on women, armed only with sticks, was unnecessary in any circumstances, despite the findings of the Second Commission.

That the Africans did not see the affair in the same light is shown by a motion put forward by two African members of the Legislative Council of Nigeria. On January 28th 1931 a motion was proposed by T.A. Doherty and seconded by C.C. Adeniyi-Jones, Members for Lagos, which stated "that this House expresses its profound regret which the Honourable members equally with your Excellency's government feel for the loss of life which disturbances in the Calabar and Owerri Province of Nigeria occasioned, and its deep sympathy with all those to whom these events have unfortunately brought personal bereavement, and views with considerable disfavour the conduct of those officers of the Nigerian government, civil or military, who were declared responsible for the various firings on unarmed women which were found to be 'not justified' according to the reports of the Aba Commission of Enquiry 1930, and recommends that Officers responsible should be brought to the Bar of Justice in the Courts of Law, or alternatively that they should be dismissed from the service of the British Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria with forfeiture of their pensions."[1] The motion was lost, an amendment moved by the Assistant Chief Secretary being carried with

1. Motion proposed by T.A. Doherty, Nigerian Council, 28 January 1931, C.O. 583 File 1056/A (C.O. 583/177).

the help of the official majority. The guilt of the women was emphasised and the conclusions of the First Commission reasserted by those defending the officers.[1] Drummond Shiels thought that the Assistant Chief Secretary must have 'handled the Council well and he is entitled to congratulations'.

A 'patriot' wrote to 'West Africa': 'one is staggered to observe that cold water was thrown on the report of the Kingdon Commission, comprising both officials and non-officials. If the Government knew at the outset that it was not going to entertain the findings of the Kingdon Commission why did it appoint it?'[2]

Surprisingly, the Labour Party and press seems generally to have ignored the incident. It was not discussed by the Labour party conferences nor the executive nor by the T.U.C. The 'New Statesman' and 'New Leader' seem to have largely ignored it at the time. The usual band of experts seem to have had their attention focused on East Africa and Kenya during this period.[3] It was left to individual M.P.s, such as Mr. Horrabin, to press the government for information and to ask about the amount of the fines imposed.

However, people to the left of the Labour party seemed to take note. The 'New Leader' mentioned the affair many years later after the I.L.P. had broken with the Labour party. It mentioned it in an 'Empire Special' under the

1. M. Perham, op.cit., p.217.
2. 'West Africa', 21 March 1931
3. Even Leys seemed rather vague about the incident. He discussed it with Shiels: 'He told me sorrowfully that he and I were the only people who took some view or other - I think it was about that massacre of 20 women somewhere in Nigeria'. Leys to Holtby, 29 May 1930, Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.

heading 'African Empire is a Slave Colony - revolting workers shot down'. 'In 1929, 30,000 women in the palm-oil district of S.E. Nigeria demonstrated against high taxation and exploitation by the Niger Company. They assembled outside the Company's depot at Aba. They were asked to disperse. When they refused to do so the British troops were ordered to fire machine guns. 80 people in the crowd were killed and 87 wounded. As though this were not enough the Government imposed a collective fine of £850 on the villages in which the women lived to reimburse the Company.'[1]

This report was exaggarated and wrong in some details. Nevertheless, Lord Passfield's response to the incident was somewhat strange for a Colonial Secretary who had declared in his 'Memorandum on Native Policy' that his main concern was to protect African interests. The women were not urging revolution and violence. They had genuine grievances which they were demonstrating about in a noisy, but not especially violent, manner. Margery Perham writes that 'it is surprising that very few people were mishandled by the women, and no one seriously injured either among those they singled out for special attack, or those who barred their way, though in numerous cases they had them at their mercy. It is clear that the leaders, even at their own risk, were counselling moderation'.[2] Ralph Fox, a Marxist, writes that the 'story of this women's movement against imperialism...is so horrible in all its details and so typical of colonial development and policy'. The unbroken continuity of that policy is shown by the

1. 'New Leader', 25 February 1938, Empire supplement, p.iv.
2. M. Perham, op.cit., p.206-207

fact that 'it took place in a 'model' colony, under a Labour government and that the massacre was justified by that government'.[1] George Padmore, a writer associated with the I.L.P., wrote that 'the most significant feature of the revolt was that the women's hatred was directed as much against the Chiefs as against the officials, the Chiefs in the affected areas were not respected by the people. They were arrogant, illiterate upstarts put into office by the British government as tax collectors. What happened was inevitable under the system of Indirect Rule'.[2] The incident and the response to it of the Labour Colonial Secretary and his Under-Secretary shows that all was not as well in Nigeria as had been thought. It indicated that 'indirect rule' was not as successful as had been suggested by Lugard and others. The Colonial Secretary seems to have hoped that the affair would blow over as soon as possible and that Sir Donald Cameron, one of the foremost advocates of 'indirect rule', would be able to sort out any problems connected with 'indirect rule' in the S.E. Provinces of Nigeria. Labour party policy seems to have had very few constructive ideas as far as Nigeria was concerned. The Colonial Secretary relied too much on the advice of his civil servants.

Another incident involving the use of force occurred in Gambia in November 1929. On 14 November 1929 a large mob surrounded the offices of Mr. Ogden, a representative of the United Africa Company. The employees of the company were on strike and there was very bad feeling against Mr. Ogden. Police intervened using bayonets and

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1. R. Fox, op.cit., p.91.
2. G. Padmore 'Africa: Britain's Third Empire' (London, 1949), p.94.

and that the men were back at work.[1]

Questions were asked in the House of Commons by Labour M.P.s about the incidents. On 20 November 1929 Mr. W. Brown asked the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he was aware of the position of the workers in Gambia in the employment of the Palmine company; whether he was aware that the manager of the company gave three days notice to employees of the firm who were members of the Bathurst Trade Union to quit the union or be dismissed. Mr. Horrabin asked about the declaration of the state of martial law in the colony, and Mr. Gill asked whether the government of Gambia was giving any facilities allowing the workers to organise in trade unions.[2]

The Labour party and press seemed interested in the matter because it involved trade union rights. The Abertillery and District Trades and Labour Council sent a letter to the Colonial Office on 19 November 1929, protesting against the action of Messrs. Palmine Limited in their issuing three days notice to their employees in Gambia, British West Africa, to leave their Trade Union or be dismissed. 'We call upon the Colonial Office to see to it that these workers have the elementary right to organise within trade unions.'[3] Letters were also received from other trades councils, constituency Labour parties, co-operative societies, national unions and union branches.

The League Against Imperialism, a body which the Labour party had refused to join because it thought it

1. Governor to Passfield, 16 November 1929, Governor to Passfield 18 November 1929, op.cit.
2. House of Commons Reports 20 November 1929, Vol.232, cols. 4867.
3. Letter from Abertillery and District Trades and Labour Council to C.O. 19 November 1929 C.O. 87 12167/29 (C.O. 87/229).

communist inspired and directed, also bombarded the Colonial Office with complaints about the behaviour of the Palmine company in Gambia. R. Bridgeman, the secretary of The League, wrote to the Colonial Office asking it to investigate the affair and the behaviour of the company in refusing to allow its members to belong to the Bathurst Trade Union.[1] He had written to the Colonial office before the situation had become violent and the civil servants had advised that they did not see why the League Against Imperialism should be allowed to waste their time and stir up trouble. They decided to ask the Governor what the cause of the trouble was without telling Bridgeman.[2]

After the incident involving the use of force, the civil servants prepared a despatch to the Governor praising the action of the police. Drummond Shiels minuted that he was not 'altogether happy about this'. 'I think the draft despatch rather fulsome. I think the report of the Police Chief shows that he acted reasonably but I am more concerned with what led up to such a serious position.' He wanted the terms of reference for the Committee of Enquiry to include the whole question of labour restrictions and conditions which had led up to the strike. 'I would not like the impression given to the governor that we are indifferent to the causes of disorder so long as it is put down with a firm hand when it occurs.'[3]

The despatch which Lord Passfield sent to Sir Edward Denham on 18 December 1929 included these points. However, Lord Passfield stated that "on the information at present

1. Letter from League Against Imperialism to C.O. 6 November 1929, op.cit.
2. Minutes C.O. Gambia op.cit., 7 November 1929, 8 November 1929.
3. Minute Drummond Shiels, op.cit., 10 November 1929.

before me, I consider that the police were handled with skill and resolution, that the behaviour of the force as a whole in trying circumstances, was creditable to them as a disciplined body and that Captain Flint's actions were worthy of commendation."[1] The Colonial Secretary also asked whether the allegations that the company had given notices to quit to members of the trade union were true. He seemed more willing to commend police who attacked strikers than one would have expected from a Labour Colonial Secretary. This was another example of the influence the civil servants had over Lord Passfield.

The Enquiry was conducted by Mr. Manson, the chief judicial officer, and completed by January 1930. The enquiry exonerated the police but did not provide information on the point about whether the company had given notice to members of the trade union. Passfield wrote to the acting Governor, C.R. Workman, to ask him whether he could give him information on this point. He also enquired what demands had been made by the trade union and what the terms of the settlement were.[2]

The civil servants at the Colonial Office were against making further enquiries and thought that to re-open the enquiry would defeat its own object. They thought that the whole incident had been exaggerated for propaganda purposes by the Labour Research department,[3] M.P.s and associations which had been bombarding the Colonial Office with resolutions.[4] Shiels agreed that they should not press for a further enquiry except on the

1. Passfield to Governor Denham, 18 December 1929, op.cit.
2. Passfield to Acting Governor, 14 March 1930, C.O.87, File 12182/30, (C.O. 87/230).
3. A communist organisation which was not connected with the Labour party.
4. C.O. Minutes, Gambia 27 February 1930, op.cit.

points that had been mentioned. He thought that the police had behaved well and were well handled. His interest was more in the causes of the dispute; he was surprised to find that the trade union was not registered as he had gathered it was from the file containing a copy of its elaborate rules. He thought it would be well if the class of trade union legislation was looked at generally in the colonies, 'as trade unions...are likely increasingly to arise and develop' in Africa. Although he hoped they would be under better guidance in the rest of the African colonies than they had been in Gambia. He did not trust Mr. Small, the secretary of the Bathurst trade union (who was friendly with communists).[1] Dr. Shiels showed interest in the general question of trade union legislation in the colonies, but it had taken an incident to spur him into asking for an enquiry into the question. It had not been done, as one might have thought, as a matter of course on the Labour party taking office.

On 14 April 1930, the Acting Governor wrote to Lord Passfield to say that Mr. Ogden had said that there was no foundation for the allegation that Palmine Limited had given notice to their men that they must leave the union within three days or be dismissed. The settlement had led to an increase of wages of over 20% over those of the previous year.[2] The trade union had justified itself on the ground that, before the strike, the firm had decided to offer lower wages than those in force the previous year.[3]

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1. Shield Minute, op.cit., 8 March 1930.
2. Workman to Passfield, 14 April 1930, op.cit.
3. C.O. Gambia, Minute 7 May 1930, op.cit.

Horrabin wrote to Lord Passfield on 22 September 1930 to say that he had learned that there had been victimisation following the strike. He also had been informed that there was a system of state exploitation of labour, owing to a system of piece work and contract labour carried on in a department of public works under non-trade union foremen.[1] The Colonial Secretary wrote to the Governor enquiring about these points. The new Governor replied that there was no ground for the allegation of victimisation, but there had been some unemployment due to the high wages which had been won by the strikers.

A civil servant wrote to Horrabin to inform him that the Governor had sent replies on the two questions that he had raised. The Chamber of Commerce had been referred to, but no instances had been adduced except three alleged instances which on investigation proved not to be examples of victimisation. Concerning the labour employed in the Public Works Department, at no time had the labour employed exceeded 500 and there had been no cases of victimisation and no lockout.[2]

Whatever the facts of the case the incident of the Bathurst strike went down in left-wing thought as an example of the imperialist nature of British colonialism. The 'New Leader' erroneously stated that after the strike 'the Gambia Government instructed the police to raid union headquarters. Some 40 natives were wounded.'[3] This allegation is completely untrue. Fox relates the incident as follows. 'Levers in Bathurst dismissed all

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1. Horrabin to Passfield, 22 September 1930, op.cit.
2. Letter to Horrabin, 26 November 1930, C.O. 87 File 12182/30, (C.O. 87/230)
3. 'New Leader', 25 February 1938, Empire supplement, p.iv.

their workers who were members of trade unions, including the sailors and engineers of the river and coastal traffic steamers. The Governor of the colony refused to recognise the legality of the trade unions and used the local garrison against the strikers, as a result of which over 40 workers were wounded. Only an almost complete general strike forced the Governor to recognise the trade union, whilst the trust had to increase the wages of its workers."[1] This again is a biased account.

The official report stated that the strike was about wages, that on 14 November fifteen persons were injured but only three - two police and one rioter - were detained in hospital and that troops were brought up as a precaution but were not needed, martial law was not proclaimed and business was not suspended.[2] The Governor later stated that he and the firm had been willing to recognise the trade union and that the firm did not issue notices that the men should leave the trade union within three days.[3] The idea that the firm was issuing notices to members of the trade union may have come about as a result of the manager giving verbal warning that all the employees should consider themselves under one month's formal notice to terminate their agreements because of the amalgamation of Palmine's and United Africa.[4] The absorption by United Africa of all the British firms in Bathurst led to a reduction of overheads and staff.[5]

It would seem that the importance of the strike and

1. R. Fox, op.cit., p.89.
2. House of Commons Debates, 5th series, 27 November 1929, Vol. 232,cols.1410-11, 28 November 1929, col.1657.
3. Governor to Passfield, 14 April 1930, op.cit.
4. ibid.
5. Governor Palmer to Passfield, 21 October 1930, op.cit.

the use of police to quell a disturbance was exaggerated by the League Against Imperialism and others. The Labour Research Department was interested in the affair because the trade union had been granted affiliation to the L.R.D. Some trade unions were interested because they feared that the issue was one of trade union rights. The Colonial Office civil servants were generally against the idea of African trade unions and the ministers were not as vigorous in defending the Bathurst trade union as they might have been.

The Labour Research Department wrote that 'the attitude of the Labour government seems to be one of complete confidence in the Governor, in spite of the fact that he was appointed under a Conservative Government and has shown hostility to trade unions. When the victimisation of the trade unions in Bathurst was first brought to his notice on 31 October, he returned a very indifferent reply on 6 November to the effect that he had not received any report of the Governor of Gambia, and even after the further information sent, the official of the C.O. stated on 14 November that Lord Passfield saw no good reason to call for a report. It was only when reports of the events appeared in the press and it had been stated that the matter would be raised in the House of Commons that Lord Passfield tried to allay criticism by stating that he was receiving a report from the Governor. Both to the questions asked in the House and in reply to letters, the Colonial Office tried to minimise the whole affair, and to hide the fact that there has been a serious industrial crisis in Bathurst from which the workers have emerged victorious.'[1]

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1. Monthly Circular of the Labour Research Department, January 1930.

The significance of the incident was that it alerted Shiels to the fact thattrade unions were developing in the African colonies. He persuaded Passfield to sent out a circular, in September, asking for the annulment of any law which made the formation of trade unions a criminal offence. Investigations were set up in the department to inquire into labour legislation in the colonies, to set standards and draft legislation and administrative orders.[1]

Another incident involving a strike which led to violence occured in the Gold Coast. There was a strike of African labourers at the Ariston Gold Mine at Prestea in the Western Province over non-payment of wages. The strike began on 15 September 1930, after many of the labourers had been left unpaid. It developed into a riotous disturbance and the Africans surrounded the house of Mr. Best, the timekeeper responsible for the payment of wages. A party of Europeans armed themselves with rifles and set out to rescue Mr. Best. In the resulting fracas, seven Africans were wounded by rifle fire and an eighth by a stone. Mr. Rennie Smith, the Labour M.P. for Penistone, asked a question about the incident. In reply, Dr. Shiels stated that it was understood that 'a number of African employees attacking the quarters of a European timekeeper were fired upon by other European employees and eight were wounded.' An inquiry into the affair was being conducted by the District Commissioner in accordance with the law of the colony.[2]

James Maxton wrote a letter to the Colonial Office

1. C.O. 323/1117/80041/3, Colonial Labour Committee minutes of meetings.
2. House of Commons Reports, 5th series, Vol.246, col. 48-49, 8 December 1930.

in which he included some correspondence from a Mr. Bankole whom he had recently met in London. Mr. Bankole stated that some Africans had been shot dead and that the affair had been hushed up after an investigation by a petty District Officer.[1] Mr. Maxton wrote that 'if the account of the affair is as he alleges it is a shocking crime and even more shocking in that it would seem to have been hushed up. I would like your assurance that the matter will be fully investigated.'[2] Lord Passfield replied to Maxton on 10 December 1930 stating that none of the eight workmen died from their wounds and 'certainly none were shot dead at the time.' 'The reason for the firing on them was that they were attacking the house and threatening the life of a European employee: and whatever their grievance against him may have been, it was presumably necessary to take vigorous measures to save his life. The suggestion that the affair is being hushed up is difficult to understand. The law under which the enquiry was conducted by the District Commissioner who is the proper official to conduct it, lays down officially that every enquiry shall be conducted publicly.' Lord Passfield expected to receive the report of the enquiry in the 'very near future'.[3]

The Governor sent a copy of the report of the enquiry to Lord Passfield on 10 December 1930. The enquiry stated that the trouble was due to irregularity in the payment of wages by the mine. 'A large proportion of the labourers had not been paid for several weeks owing

1. Letter to Maxton from Mr. K.A. Bankole, 11 November 1930, C.O. Gold Coast 96, File 6769/30, (C.O. 96/695)
2. Letter to Passfield from Maxton, 4 December 1930, ibid.
3. Passfield to Maxton, 10 December 1930, C.O. 96, File 6769/30 (C.O. 96/695).

to lack of funds and their patience, severely tried by the behaviour of the European timekeeper, Mr. Best, finally gave way on the pay day of Saturday 13 September, when many of them were left unpaid.' 'Any member of the party (of Europeans) who could be identified as having fired at any member of the crowd would be liable to criminal proceedings for wounding or attempting to kill but there is no independent evidence to identify any particular member of the rescue party as having fired at any person in the crowd.' The Governor thought that an adequate enquiry had been made into the affair and he was satisfied that no further steps could be taken with a view to criminal prosecution of any of the parties concerned. He considered that the firing on the Africans was 'unjustified' and that the company should have known that wages were overdue.[1]

The Colonial Office investigated the finances of the Company concerned and found that it was in a very unstable financial position.[2] The strike had been due to the bad management of the Company and its failure to keep up with its payments of wages. The Colonial Office made some investigations into the possibility of strengthening the law dealing with the employment of labour. Dr. Shiels thought that there was 'a reluctance on the part of Colonial governments to tackle the business of wages and labour conditions'. He was glad to see that the officials in the Colonial Office were alive to the necessity of putting some pressure on, in the form of a letter which they had drafted for Lord Passfield to send

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1. Governor of Gold Coast, A. Rillak to Lord Passfield, 10 December 1930,. ibid.
2. C.O. Gold Coast 96, File 6769/30, civil servants' Minute 7 November 1930.

to the Governor, who thought that there was no call for such legislation. Shiels added a clause which made the pressure slightly more definite.[1]

Passfield's letter to the Governor noted that the Governor, the Attorney-General and the Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs were of the opinion that there was no call for any alteration of the law for the purposes of 'further safeguarding the wages of native employees', but thought that perhaps it was desirable to enact some such provisions 'as I am not entirely satisfied that there is not a need for something being done'.[2] The last line was Shiels' addition. The Governor wrote back on 20 July 1931 that it was questionable whether such a form of agreement would be acceptable either to the mining companies or the mine labourer in the colony. He still thought that the wages of 'native' employees were adequately safeguarded by the existing law.[3]

By the time that this communication had been received and considered there had been a change of government and it was decided to leave the matter as it stood. The civil servant who wrote the minute on the question stated that it had been 'Dr. Shiels intention to go into the question of the actual arrangements for the payment of wages to native workers employed under contract, as part of an exhaustive review of native labour legislation which he had in mind', but as matters now stood the question could be put by.[4] The civil servants did not seem very

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1. C.O. Gold Coast 96, File 6880/31 (C.O.96/696) Dr.Shiels Minute, 17 March 1931.
2. Passfield to Governor, 23 March 1931, C.O.96, File 6880/31 (C.O. 96/696). The Colonial Office was tentatively trying to ensure that Africans' wages were protected.
3. Governor to Passfield, 20 July 1931, ibid.
4. Minute, 3 February 1932, ibid.

keen on Shiels' idea of reviewing labour legislation in the African colonies and were slow to get started with the work. This indicated that a minister needed to be very determined to achieve reform if he was to overcome the reluctance of senior civil servants to alter previous departmental practice and policies. The National Government did not follow up Shiels' concern with labour legislation.

The incident also showed that some firms in West Africa were not being run with a proper concern for African interests. Lord Passfield again seemed more than ready to accept the official version of the incident and did not insist upon any attempt to try and find the Europeans who fired on the Africans and charge them. The 'New Leader' again, at a later date, printed an inaccurate account of the incident. 'The Europeans organised an armed squad to terorise the miners and marched through the villages in which they were holding meetings. In one village they opened fire without warning, wounding ten natives and killing five.'[1] In fact, as has been stated, no-one was killed, and eight was the total of wounded. A similar incorrect version is related by George Padmore.[2] Although the versions of the incidents put out by some left-wing writers were exaggerated, the affair does show that in West Africa some capitalist companies were not very concerned with the welfare of their African employees. Lord Passfield was not very vigorous in ensuring that this situation was changed.

1. 'New Leader' Empire Special 25 February 1938, p.iv.
2. G. Padmore, 'The Awakening of Negro Toilers' (London, 1931),p.98.

The last African disturbance that occurred in West Africa during the period of the second Labour Government took place in Sierra Leone in February 1931. Haidara Kontofili, a Moslem leader, came to stay with the people of Kambia. He began preaching among them as a religious leader but then expanded his teaching to cover politics and urged them not to pay the hut tax which was proving particularly irksome to them since the palm kernel industry, their chief source of income, had collapsed due to overproduction. Haidara then incited the Africans against the government officials. A platoon was sent into the area. This was divided in two because transpat was not available for the whole group of soldiers. While going to arrest Haidara, the first group of soldiers were ambushed by Haidara and a group of Africans. The commander of the soldiers, Lieutenant Holmes, was killed, but the second-in-command, Sergeant Culm, took over, shot Hiadara dead and retreated his men in good order. Four of Hiadara's followers were also killed in the skirmish, which took place on 16 February 1931. After the death of Hiadara, Kambia was quiet and no further action involving the use of troops took place.

On 4 April 1931, Cookson, the acting Governor, wrote to Passfield, sending him copies of the official announcement made to the Legislative Council on 25 March 1931 on the recent disturbances. Hiadara was an immigrant from French Guinea, an expulsion order had been issued against him on 9 February 1931 which he had declined to obey and threatened to kill the District Commissioner. The troops had been sent in to arrest him. In the skirmish, Lieutenant Holmes, Hiadara and four of his followers had

been killed.[1]

Further despatches were sent from the acting Governor. A despatch sent before the official announcement stated that the 'death of the fanatic had nipped the trouble in the bud.' It had the makings of a serious insurrection in the Protectorate. 'Though for many years past the natives of the Protectorate have been ordinarily peaceful and contented, there have recently been seeds of discontent in the present low price of produce, and I have myself received complaints as to the difficulty of finding money for the payment of House tax.' 'The loyalty of a very few chiefs during the crisis was certainly suspect - but all in their heart of hearts prefer peace and associate peace with British rule.'[2]

On 8 April 1931 the acting Governor, Captain Cookson, made a speech to a meeting of chiefs held at Kambia. He said that he was sure that the people had no cause for complaint. 'Of course, none of us like to pay tax; but government has to pay soldiers and court messengers and has many other expenses too; it is only foolish persons that think that government can go on successfully without taxes.' 'The killing of this officer is a very great wrong done to H.M.G. As for Tonko Limba chiefdom, I cannot say yet that they are forgiven, and I am still considering the question of further punishment. Tonko chiefdom is very poor, otherwise I think that I should have been inclined to require them to pay a heavy fine but if so it would fall upon the poor and they would suffer.'[3]

1. A/Governor to Passfield, 4 April 1931, C.O. Sierra Leone, File 9569, (C.O. 267/633).
2. A/Governor to Passfield, 6 March 1931, ibid.
3. Speech of Acting Governor Cookson to meeting of Chiefs at Kambia, 8 April 1931, C.O. 267, File 9569 (C.O. 267/633).

On 17 April 1931, Cookson sent a despatch to Lord Passfield stating that Chief Alimami Bombo Lahai had forfeited the confidence of the government because he had harboured Haidara Kontofili in the town of Bubuya between October 1930 and February 1931 and permitted him to make seditious speeches and incite persons to resist the government. The Acting Governor thought that the Chief should be deposed and that the stipend paid to the next chief should be suspended. He regarded it as 'unfortunate' that there was no 'collective punishment' legislation for the protectorate.[1]

The civil servants at the Colonial Office advised Passfield that the Chief should be deposed, but they disagreed with suspension of the payment of £10 p.a. to his successors. They did not think it was necessary to consider the enactment of any 'collective punishment legislation' in Sierrra Leone.[2] Passfield followed this advice.

On 16 June 1931, he wrote to the new Governor Hodson that he agreed that the Chief had forfeited the confidence of the government and approved his deposition. He thought that to continue the stipend as an act of grace would have a good effect. With regard to the proposal to enact legislation on the lines of the Nigerian Collective Punishment Ordinance, the Colonial Secretaryhesitated to sanction the introduction of any such legislation 'at the present time except on the strongest grounds. Moreover, I consider that there is no evidence to show that the existing organisation and the existing law were inadequate to deal withthe situation and even if the Ordinance had

1. Cookson to Passfield, 17 April 1931, ibid.
2. Minute, 8 May 1931, ibid.

been in force in Sierra Leone, it would not, in my opinion, have been equitable to have used it in this particular case.'[1]

After the receipt of the military report on the incident, which had been sent on 28 April 1931[2] but reached the Colonial Office later owing to the delay which correspondence took to arrive, Lord Passfield again wrote to the Governor stating that while he considered that the measures taken by the late Lieutenant Holmes for the security of his force could not be regarded as adequate, he realised that it was believed that Haidara would probably surrender without resistance and that the Miligi Bridge, where the ambush took place, was three miles from their ultimate destination, Bubuya. Passfield considered that the sending of a bare minimum of troops to arrest Haidara, should be condemned. Troops should have been sent in sufficient force to render resistance unthinkable in the minds of the people.[3] Troops should not be used as police.

As with the other incidents, Lord Passfield and the Colonial Office seemed content that order had been restored and did not make an attempt to redress the Africans' grievances. The 'New Leader' stated that the trouble had broken out because of the depression in the palm-kernel industry which had brought the peasants to the point of starvation.[4] The 'West African Mail' thought that 'the contributory causes which may have influenced the poor and illiterate aborigines of

1. Passfield to Governor, 16 June 1931, ibid.
2. Cookson to Passfield, 28 April 1931, ibid.
3. Passfield to Governor, 7 July 1931, ibid.
4. 'New Leader', February 25, 1938, Empire Special, p.iv.

the Protectorate to give heed to the foolish advice of non-payment of taxes, may have been the frightful collapse of trade in their principal products on which they depend for their livelihood and to liquidate their public and private liabilities, namely, the rotten prices offered for palm kernels, kola nuts and palm oil in the local markets. Palm kernel is said to be sold at 4d, per bushel, kola nuts at next to nothing and nobody requires palm oil. They have stopped production of these products and diverted their attention to rice cultivation which serves the useful purpose of staving the cravings of hunger although the crop is plentiful in the market and the price discouraging.'[1]

G. Padmore wrote that the Haidara affair was one of the most serious rebellions which had broken out on the West coast for a number of years.[2] Haidara had called upon the peasants to refuse to pay taxes and to demand that the Crown Lands in Sierra Leone should be confiscated and divided among the peasants. The government officials had been opposed to the idea of the peasants growing rice to prevent them from starvation. After the revolt had been stopped by the shooting of Haidara, Padmore writes that hundreds of huts of natives who took part in the uprising were burned to the ground and men and women were arrested. This does not appear to be true according to the official documents. An attempt was made to try two men for the murder of Lieutenant Holmes, but after an extended hearing the Chief Justice found no evidence sufficient to convict them and they were set at liberty. In reporting the trial, 'West Africa' stated that 'the

1. West African Mail, February 1930.
2. G. Padmore, op.cit., pp.97-98.

outcome at least leaves it impossible for anyone to accuse the government of a too willing acceptance of scapegoats.'[1]

These incidents in West Africa showed that the position of the Africans in West Africa was not as enviable as the Labour party's pamphlets made out. The A.C.I.Q. was mainly concerned with the situation in East Africa, particularly Kenya, and paid almost no attention at all to West Africa. However, the incidents which occurred during the second Labour Government highlighted the need for a more detailed study of the policies which were being pursued in West Africa. The Aba 'massacre' had indicated that indirect rule was a difficult policy to apply successfully unless honest and capable African chiefs existed to administer it. All the incidents had shown that the Africans in West Africa were particularly vulnerable to economic depression because of their dependence on a few crops. A depression in the prices of their crops led to great hardship and starvation. The incidents in Gambia and the Gold Coast had indicated the necessity for African trade unions and legislation to protect African conditions of employment. In general, the incidents proved that the Africans in West Africa were likely to suffer hardship under corrupt African chiefs and European combines unless measures were taken to protect African interests. Passfield seemed too ready to accept the advice of his civil servants to commend troops and police for restoring order and not concerned enough to examine the underlying causes of the disturbances.

E.D. Morel wrote in 'The Black Man's Burden', which was published in 1920,[2] that the administration of the

1. West Africa, 6 June 1931.
2. E.D. Morel, 'The Black Man's Burden', (London,1920) p.vii.

'dark-skinned peoples' was the greatest moral responsibility which the New Democracy would have to face. It was its supreme test. In the book, Morel protested against the policy of the British government decreeing that 90 per cent of the palm kernel nuts exported from West Africa should be shipped to British ports. He thought that this policy was wrong because it would restrict output and, to that extent, diminish the prosperity of the West African dependencies. It limited the 'native' producers to a single market for the disposal of their produce, virtually creating a monopoly which could control prices. It imposed 'upon our African protected subjects, who are powerless to resist it, a system which sacrifices their interests to a handful of capitalists'[1] in Britain. Morel hoped that 'when Britain has once more an honest government in power not amenable to the pressures of vested interests, one of the first duties of that government should be the repeal of legislation which marks a lamentable decision in our West African policy.'[2]

Neither J.H. Thomas nor Lord Passfield did this. Lord Passfield took the incidents involving the use of force against the Africans as minor disturbances which only required careful handling for peace to be re-established. He did not make any attempt to change the system which left many African producers dependent upon British firms for the price of their produce. Surprisingly, the British trade unions paid little attention to the problems of the Africans in West Africa and there was no mention of them in T.U.C. debates or reports. Although some trade unions paid some attention to the incident in

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1. E.D. Morel, op.cit., p.x.
2. ibid.

Gambia, there was no consistent trade union pressure on the Government to help set up trade unions in the African colonies.

Another instance of Lord Passfield not taking the Africans' point of view was his approval of the Appointments and Deposition of Chiefs Ordinance. The Ordinance allowed Governors to appoint and depose Chiefs. They were not required to consult the Secretary of State before exercising this power.[1] The African members of the Legislative Council of Nigeria cabled to the Secretary of State, expressing their strong objection to the Bill. The African members believed that the Bill was dangerous because it gave the Governor a power which might lead to a serious curtailment of African initiative by the creation of a class of puppet chiefs. The Nigerian Democratic Party met and asked the Secretary of State to withhold his consent to the Bill until he had met with representatives of the African community. 'West Africa' commented: 'the unpopularity of the Bill with the Africans becomes the more understandable if it be kept in mind that it largely reduces his power to govern himself just as he is being asked to contribute directly to his own administration treasury - that is, just when he might logically have regarded his views as likely to receive greater, and not less, consideration.'[2] Once again in West Africa Passfield took the civil servants' advice rather than trying to initiate policies which favoured the Africans. The study of Passfield's West African policy confirms that, as in East Africa, he was not very vigorous in ensuring that the Africans' interests were energetically pursued.

1. House of Commons reports, Fifth Series, Vol.244, cols. 845-846, 5 November 1930.
2. West Africa, 22 February 1930, p.174.

Gupta[1] concludes that during Passfield's period at the Colonial Office 'in the tussle between principles and expediency, principles won.' However, to the present writer the position seems to be the opposite - in the tussle between principles and expediency, expediency won. It is true that Passfield did enunciate the Labour party's principles in his 'Memorandum on Native Policy' but the way he introduced the document to the Cabinet indicated that he would not be determined to carry them out. He stated that he was outlining the principles to allay the apprehensions of those concerned with African welfare. There was no positive commitment to the policy he was introducing. This was further proved by the fact that he did not force the Colonial Governors to amend all legislation which went against the principles of the White Paper. As has been shown, Passfield was only prevented from introducing a pro-settler solution to the problem of Closer Union by the intervention of the Cabinet and the pressure of the A.C.I.Q., A.S.A.P.S., Oldham and Lugard. The East African budgets were not amended to bring expenditure into line with the 'Memo'. Grigg was not recalled, despite the fact that he was against the Labour party's policy. The Joint Committee's composition was biased in favour of the Conservatives rather than the Labour party. Kenyatta's evidence about African grievances was not heard by the Joint Committee and Passfield refused to meet him.[2] In Southern Rhodesia, Passfield

1. P.S. Gupta, op.cit., p.200.
2. However, Shiels did see him. Passfield saw the 'official' African witnesses at the C.O. but 'more as a 'gesture' than anything else'. Gupta, p.195.

approved the Land Apportionment Act which upheld a colour bar in the distribution of land. In West Africa, as has been shown, Passfield appeared too willing to commend the forces of law and order when they had subdued a disturbance and not willing enough to investigate the causes of the disturbances. In Nigeria, he approved the Appointment and Deposition of Chiefs Ordinance, despite the strong opposition of Africans.

It could be said in Passfield's defence that he amended the Kenya Land Trust Ordinance to make it more favourable to Africans. However, this Ordinance had been strongly criticised by the Labour party in opposition and Passfield was under a strong moral obligation to amend it. It could also be said that Passfield did start investigations in the Colonial Office about some of the Africans' grievances. However, investigations, commissions and committees of inquiry were often a device for delaying action, especially when the people conducting the investigations and inquiries were not committed to radical change. Labour policy had been to end the Africans' grievances, not spend more time studying them. Labour pamphlets had pointed out that more money was spent on white education per capita than African education but nothing concrete was done to reverse this trend. They also pointed out that the white settlers in Kenya preserved to themselves some of the best land in the Highlands but nothing was done to reverse this policy. The Labour party pamphlet on Africa had also shown that the Africans were more highly taxed than the Europeans in Kenya but, again, nothing was done by

Passfield to reverse this policy. 'Forced labour' was not outlawed by Passfield in all African colonies and dependencies. Common[illegible] franchises were not instituted. Passfield appeared too willing to accept civil service advice which tended to be in favour of the status quo. Shiels found that, after examining facts about expenditure on Africans in Kenya, the case that the Africans were unjustly treated was made out. The civil servants, however, had recommended exactly the opposite after studying the same data. The problem was that the senior civil servants were sympathetic to the white settlers and were willing to accept their point of view. There were exceptions, like Green, who ensured that Northern Rhodesia was not amalgamated with Southern Rhodesia, but on the whole, the senior civil servants were very unsympathetic to the views of the Labour party's A.C.I.Q., particularly those of Norman Leys. Leys may have been a difficult man to work with, and he did seem to have a rather arrogant assumption that only he knew the 'real truth' about East Africa, but, in retrospect, it appears that his views were nearer the truth than those of Lord Passfield or his Colonial Office civil servants. Leys' assessment,[1] that during the two years of Labour Government 'the Colonial Office made no real effort to fulfil promises' that had been made in 'The Colonial Problem' and 'Labour and the Nation', seems largely correct. The crucial points were the failure to set up common franchises and the failure to revise the 1931 Kenyan Budget.

The main reason for these failures was not dependence

1. N. Leys to Dr. Drummond Shiels, 25 September 1931, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 9.

on the Liberals but Passfield's timidity and dependence on his senior civil servants. The Liberals would probably have been willing to support a more positive colonial policy. Many Liberals such as L.J. Cadbury, Isaac Foot, Donald Maclean, G. Murray and C.P. Scott signed the 'Memorial' which had urged the Labour Government to pursue a more positive policy. Also, between 1925-1929, the two Liberal M.P.s, who were interested in the Kenyan administration, asked 55 questions hostile to the policies being pursued in Kenya and only two supportive questions.[1] It is not possible to say exactly what the Liberals would have done if the Labour Government had pursued a positive colonial policy in Africa, but, what evidence there is, suggests that they would have supported it. It was not only Leys and the members of the A.C.I.Q. who were disappointed with Passfield's record, Drummond Shiels, Passfield's Under-Secretary, also thought that Passfield was too willing to accept the judgments of his senior civil servants 'without always applying the same critical examination which he gave to other matters.'[2] Margaret Cole, who was sympathetic to the Webbs, thought that Sidney was 'a failure as a minister' because he failed to follow up his White Paper and ensure that it was carried out in detail.[3] The conclusion seems to be that if MacDonald had wanted a more positive colonial policy to have been pursued, he would have appointed a Colonial Secretary who was prepared to criticise conventional Colonial Office assumptions and force his civil servants and Governors

1. E.A. Brett, op.cit.,p.61.
2. D. Shiels, op.cit. p.203f.
3. M. Cole, (ed.),B. Webb Diaries', op.cit., p.XII.

to follow Labour policy. It would have been too much to expect a minority Government to reform the African empire in two years in the face of opposition from the civil servants, the Governors, the settlers, the 'establishment' in England and English businessmen; but the point is that no determined effort was made to begin the task. However, the days when British Governments could move very slowly on African affairs were coming to an end. The educated Africans were beginning to become concerned about their own political and economic development. Kenyatta took 200 copies of the White Paper back to Kenya with him. The educated Africans could see that there was a discrepancy between the policies outlined by the Colonial Office and the policies put into effect in Kenya.[1]

The leading Fabian had not been very successful in changing the colonial system by gradual means. The motto of the Fabian Society was: 'For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently, when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be in vain and fruitless.'[2] Lord Passfield was waiting for the right moment to strike but never actually 'struck hard'. Norman Leys believed that the time had come to 'strike hard' but that Passfield had missed it. Leys outlined what he thought should have been done in his book, 'A Last Chance in Kenya'. Full control should have been given to men who were committed to the policies of the White Paper and not entrusted to

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1. N. Leys, 'Statement for Advisory Committee', 23 November 1930, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.
2. Quoted, M. Cole, 'The Story of Fabian Socialism', (London, 1963 ed.)p.1.

people who were unsympathetic. A Governor should have been appointed who was determined to enforce the White Paper and he should have made a public pronouncement that he intended to carry it out. The burden of taxation should have been shifted from the Africans to the white settlers and land policy reformed to prevent the white settlers reserving the best land for themselves. Public funds should have been redistributed in favour of the Africans. A law should have been passed which would have enfranchised all, irrespective of race, colour or creed who had reached the 'civilised life':- an income of £25 a year, combined with the ability to write a simple English sentence. Schools should have been opened equally to all and Factory Acts and Workmen's Compensation Acts should have been passed.[1] Leys's programme does not appear very radical today but it was too radical for Passfield in 1931.

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1. N. Leys, 'A Last Chance in Kenya', (London, 1931), pp.151-160.

CHAPTER 8.

DEFEAT AND RECONSIDERATION

The 1931 General Election held on 27 October after MacDonald's 'betrayal'[1] of the party was disastrous for the Labour party. 52 Labour M.P.s were elected out of 515 candidates. The National Government managed to gain the election of 554 M.P.s out of 696 candidates.[2] The parliamentary party was devastated. Of the members of the Labour government, Lansbury was the only cabinet minister to survive on the opposition side; only two junior ministers survived the debacle, Attlee and Sir Stafford Cripps. Most of the members of the parliamentary party were trade unionists. Half the party consisted of candidates sponsored by the Miners' Federation. The prestige and authority that the parliamentary party had built up inside the party in the previous decade collapsed.[3] The organisation and the trade unions increased in importance within the party. The I.L.P. was disaffiliated from the party in July 1930. The P.L.P. was unwilling to change its standing orders so as to allow the I.L.P. to determine its M.P.s' voting behaviour as a separate group in the House of Commons.[4] The I.L.P. voted for disaffiliation at the 30 July Conference in Bradford by 241 votes to 142. The I.L.P.'s policies became more revolutionary and critical of the Labour party's policies.

The Labour party directed its attention to revising its policies with a view to preparing a positive programme for the next Labour government to avoid the mistakes of

1. D. Marquand, op.cit., gives a sympathetic account of the reasons for MacDonald's decision.
2. British Political Facts 1900-1968, Butler and Freeman, (3rd ed. London 1969), p.142.
3. H. Pelling, 'A Short History of the Labour Party', (London, 1968),p.74.
4. R.E. Dowse, 'Left in the Centre', (London,1966) pp.179-184.

the 1929-31 government. There was a great desire in the party not to make the same mistakes again and so it set about the task of working out 'better' policies. However, as Miliband[1] points out, most of the leaders'were the same men, who through the twenties, had found acceptable the particular version of socialism propagated by MacDonald, whatever reservations some of them might have had about MacDonald himself'. The party leadership was still firmly committed to parliamentary politics. Attempts were made to found a new society within the party which would put forward and propogate an advanced 'socialist' programme in the absence of the I.L.P. Two groups had already come into existence, the New Fabian Research Bureau and the Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda. The N.F.R.B. continued its work and was reunited with the Fabian Society in 1930. The S.S.I.P. was amalgamated with a group which had left the I.L.P. on its disaffiliation from the Labour party and was reconstituted as the Socialist League with E.F. Wise from the I.L.P. as its first chairman. On Wise's death in 1933, Stafford Cripps took over the running of this body and it was soon in conflict with official party policy.[2] It began to question the Fabian assumption that 'socialism' would inevitably come by constitutional means.

The National Executive,however, was dominated by men of moderate views and set about preparing moderate policy statements. In December 1931, the Executive appointed a policy committee under George Lathan, to

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1. R. Miliband, op.cit., p.193.
2. Pelling, op.cit., p.76.

embark on a series of policy reports on particular problems.[1] Attlee and Cripps were members of this committee. Other leading Labour party figures outside parliament on the committee were Hugh Dalton, Herbert Morrison and Arthur Greenwood.[2] The first four reports prepared for the 1932 party conference were on "Currency, Banking and Finance", "The National Planning of Transport", "The Reorganisation of the Electricity Supply Industry", and the "Land and Planning of Agriculture".

The report on banking recommended the Nationalisation of the Bank of England and the creation of a National Investment Board. Conference amended it to include the nationalisation of the joint-stock banks. The other three reports envisaged the public ownership of transport, electricity generation and distribution and agricultural land. The 1932 Conference was in a radical mood. It passed a resolution declaring that 'the main object of the Labour Party is the establishment of socialism'[3] which it took to mean 'the common ownership of the means of production and distribution by the producers by hand and brain'. It also passed a motion which stated that 'on assuming office, either with or without power, definite Socialist legislation must be promulgated, and that the Party shall stand or fall in the House of Commons on the principles in which it has faith.'[4] The rank and file of the party seemed to be in a radical mood.

On 20 April 1933 the National Executive Committee

1. Brand, 'The British Labour Party' (London1965)p.167.
2. Pelling, op.cit., p.79.
3. Labour Party Conference Report, 1932, p.202.
4. ibid., p.204.

approved a recommendation that a Report should be presented on Imperial and Colonial policy.[1] The Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions had already decided to draft a pamphlet on Imperial Policy for the party. At a meeting on 8 February 1933 it had considered the future policy of a Labour government on taking office and decided to appoint a sub-committee consisting of Buxton, Ross and Woolf to do the work.[2] The Executive used the Imperial Advisory Committee to prepare its Report on Imperial and Colonial policy. On 8 March 1933, the Advisory Committee decided to appoint Dr. Drummond Shiels to the sub-committee which was drafting an imperial policy memo for the party.[3] Buxton seems to have been the driving force behind this decision to rewrite the party's policy. He had told Leys that the best way of getting the Labour party committed to definite measures in the Dependencies[4] was to rewrite the 'old tract that was published long ago with the imprimatur of the Party Executive'. Leys had been worried that after the Labour party had been in office for two years and 'had so totally failed to act on its expressed intentions' that the Party Executive would consider that its original policy had proved impracticable but Buxton was sure that there would never be any watering down of the old statements. Buxton pointed out to Leys, on a visit to him, that 'a man Dugdale, Major Attlee's parliamentary secretary, has been urging the policy of the nationalising of plantations, etc.' Buxton and Leys decided that Dugdale's ideas were completely chimerical since no one in East Africa wanted any such measures. They agreed that Dugdale

1. National Executive Committee Minutes, 20 April 1933.
2. Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions Minutes, 8 February 1933.
3. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 8 March 1933.
4. N. Leys to W. Holtby, 1 July 1933, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.

'knew nothing at all'.[1]

Dugdale had sent his memo on colonial policy to the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. The Committee considered it on 27 April 1932 and decided to invite Dugdale to discuss the subject with them.[2] Dugdale's memo stated that the British Colonial empire was a 'vivid example of the evils of unrestricted capitalist development.' He suggested that the socialisation and economic planning of British industry should be accompanied by similar action in the colonies. Concerning agriculture, each colonial government should take over all the land in its own territory, all 'natives' should be left on their reserves which should be increased to a suitable size, every white farmer should be bought out and their farms should then be divided into economic areas and farmed by the Colonial government. The Socialist plan for the colonies would include the establishment of Government Marketing Boards, which would take the produce from the 'natives' at a fair price and dispose of it in Great Britain and elsewhere. Agricultural factories would also grow up for the processing of 'native' produce before export. The government should run its land and factories on a non-profit making basis. If any profit were made it should be used to improve 'native' conditions in the colony. It should not be allowed to leave the colony. 'Natives' should be encouraged to take responsible positions both in the factories and on government farms. There should also be an Investment Commission.

Concerning industry, Dugdale thought that the Labour

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1. N. Leys to W. Holtby, 5 May 1932, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.
2. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 27 April 1932.

party should go out for a bold policy of nationalisation of all colonial industries and their development in the interests of the 'natives', under the control of some form of planning commission which would see that each industry grew up along the best lines and in accordance with the economic interests of the whole colony. In conclusion, Dugdale stated that the people of Britain had not woken up to the importance of the colonies. The Tories had some sort of constructive colonial policy in the booklets of the Empire Economic Union but they were absorbed in getting trade agreements with the dominions and they were not likely to turn their attention to the colonies until they had finished this task. Dugdale contended that 'now is the time for the Labour party to come forward with a bold constructive colonial policy, presented in such a way as to appeal to the imagination of the more thoughtful section of the electorate.' It was essential that the Labour party should formulate a colonial policy at the earliest possible moment and present it to the public in a clear-cut and readable form.[1] Dugdale wanted to place more emphasis on agricultural and industrial development than the Labour party's policy statements had done. The party did have a policy but it would appear from Dugdale's memo that it had not been very well publicised. There was a lack of public interest in the subject. Only one day was given to the Colonial Office every year to discuss all the various colonies with their millions of inhabitants. Dugdale's policy placed more emphasis on agricultural and industrial development than the Labour party had done in its two

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo on Colonial Policy by J. Dugdale, No.97 April 1932.

policy statements on the colonies - particularly Africa - 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's policy' (1920) and 'Labour and the Empire: Africa' (1926). Neither of these statements had contemplated buying all the white farmers out or nationalising all the colonial industries.

The complacency of the A.C.I.Q. about its policy was illustrated by the fact that Buxton and Leys (who, although he had resigned from the committee, still kept in touch with its members) thought that Dugdale's suggestions were completely unrealistic. However, even Buxton and Leys were beginning to realise that the Africans could not avoid the process of industrial and agricultural development, as some, like Wedgwood and Morel, had originally hoped. C.R. Buxton wrote in the 'Manchester Guardian' that 'the process of drawing the native into our Western economic system has begun. It cannot be arrested now.'[1] Leys thought that East Africa was 'inundated by the forces of Western industry'. The Africans could not be kept out of the Western political and economic system. 'They are in it now. Up to the neck in it.'[2] Nevertheless, the draft pamphlet on the party's colonial policy did not take much account of these new developments.

The Imperial Advisory committee considered the draft pamphlet prepared by its sub-committee on Imperial Policy on 28 June 1933. It was resolved that members of the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions should send suggested amendments to the secretary, Leonard Woolf,

1. Manchester Guardian, 27 October 1932.
2. N. Leys to Wellock, 27 June 1931, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 9.

to be considered at a meeting of the sub-committee on 5 July and that the amended draft should be re-submitted to the committee on 12 July.[1] This would indicate that there was some disagreement on some parts of the pamphlet. On 12 July 1933, the amended draft was re-submitted to the A.C.I.Q. and it was decided to forward the draft to the N.E.C. (excluding the section on trade and commerce) as amended and with alternative proposals on the mandatory system.[2] It would seem that the main areas of disagreement were trade and commerce and proposals on the mandatory system. Dr. Drummond Shiels seems to have been at odds with the other members of the committee. Leys was horrified when he saw the first draft. He thought the style was atrocious and the matter jumbled.[3]

The National Executive Committee considered the draft proposals on 26 and 27 July 1933, e specially a paper on Colonial Policy - Trade and Commerce - the 'Open Door'.[4] (This was the additional section sent by the sub-committee after the main bulk of the pamphlet.) It stated that the Labour party believed in the complete equality of trade for all nations in the markets of the non-self-governing Empire and was opposed to any administrative discrimination against foreigners in the disposal of property or the grant of concessions. Any policy that regarded a colony as a market or field of exploitation to be reserved for the benefit of British

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1. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 28 June 1933.
2. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 12 July 1933.
3. N. Leys to W. Holtby, 1 July 1933, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.
4. N.E.C. Minutes, 26 July 1933, Colonial Policy, Trade and Commerce - the 'Open Door'.

or Dominion traders and capitalists regardless of 'native' interests was to be deprecated, both from the standpoint of 'native' interests and of international political considerations. The pre-war policy of free trade had been reversed after the war with the adoption of the principle of colonial preference. The Colonial Office encouraged preferential rates for British goods in the tariff schedules of the non-self-governing colonies. It was the Ottawa agreements that had completed the process. These gave to all parts of the Empire, and not only the U.K., the benefit of the preferential regime in any colony; they also enlarged the area of discrimination against foreign traders by extending the Empire preferential schedules in most colonies and increased tariffs on non-Empire products. These agreements were not negotiated by or with the knowledge of the legislatures of the colonies, i.e., where Legislative Councils existed. The government was contemplating terminating the international treaties which prohibited the giving of preferences by certain colonies in Africa belonging to the U.K., Belgium, France, Italy and Portugal. The Colonial Secretary was hesitating because he was not sure what would be best for the interests of British trade, not out of concern for 'native' interests or any regard for international political considerations. The mandatory principle should be extended within the British Empire. This would enlarge the area of equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of all nations. Where legislatures existed in the colonies and comprised elected members there should be no fiscal discrimination against foreigners without the consent of a majority of the elected members. These Legislatures should be

directly represented in any future trade delegation. A Labour government would not seek to abrogate the African treaties, but would negotiate the removal of preferences given by Colonies and Protectorates in favour of other parts of the Empire, unless evidence was forthcoming that colonial, including 'native' opinion, was in favour of them.

The minutes of the A.C.I.Q. were circulated on 26 July and a discussion took place on the alternative drafts regarding the application of the mandatory principle which had been sent by the A.C.I.Q.[1] After a discussion in which the views of Dr. Drummond Shiels on the sub-committee were put forward by Mr. Dallas, a draft was adopted, which stated:- "If the British government really acts as a trustee for non-self-governing territories, where the native population is not qualified effectually to control by democratic parliamentary institutions the intricate mechanism of a modern state, it will be applying to them the system of the mandate established in the Covenant. It seems, therefore, both right and logical that the mandatory system should be accepted for all colonies inhabited mainly by aborigines of primitive culture. The Labour party, when it is in power, will make such a declaration, and will accept the scrutiny of the Mandates Commission in such cases, if it can be arranged."[2] It would seem that Dr. Drummond Shiels was against the acceptance of the mandatory principle. It was well known that Woolf and C.R. Buxton accepted it. They had included it in their previous pamphlet: 'Labour and the Empire: Africa', which had been published in 1926.

1. N.E.C. Minutes, 26 July 1933.
2. ibid., 26 July 1933.

The next day, 27 July 1933, the National Executive Committee considered and approved the policy report on 'Colonial policy' and the section on the 'open door'. Also circulated was a letter from Dr. Drummond Shiels in which he outlined at length his differences with the Advisory Committee on 'Colonial policy' respecting the application of the mandatory principle. After discussion, it was resolved not to follow Drummond Shiels ideas.[1] The policy report was then printed under the title 'The Colonies'.[2] Leys was happier with this than he had been with the draft. He thought that Woolf must have rewritten the official pamphlet for it was 'a vast improvement but still too vague and full of high flying good intentions'.[3]

The policy advocated in the pamphlet was similar to that proposed in the Labour party's two earlier pamphlets, 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy' (1920) and 'Labour and the Empire:Africa' (1926). This is not surprising since Leonard Woolf had a hand in writing all three pamphlets and C.R. Buxton worked on two. The first one was written by Woolf and E.D. Morel, the second one by Woolf and C.R. Buxton and the 1933 pamphlet, as has been seen, by Woolf, C.R. Buxton, McGregor Ross and Dr.Drummond Shiels. One could almost say that the Labour party's colonial policy was produced by a handful of middle class intellectuals - men such as Leonard Woolf, E.D. Morel, C.R. Buxton, Norman Leys, McGregor Ross, Lord Olivier, and Josiah Wedgwood. Not one of them was connected with the working class.

1. ibid., 27 July 1933.
2. 'The Colonies', Labour Party Policy Report No. 6 (London, August 1933)
3. N. Leys to W. Holtby, 13 July 1933, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.

The men who played the major part in formulating the Labour party's colonial policy in the interwar years were middle class humanitarians. Morel and Wedgwood had been connected with the Liberal party before the first world war but they had felt that the Liberal party was ill-equipped to deal with the rise of the working man in politics and had joined the I.L.P. However, they still preserved some Liberal principles, a belief in internationalism, humanitarianism, the appeal to reason and a dislike of violent revolution, as well as a belief in the gradual reform of abuses. None of these people were revolutionaries or Marxists. They were all middle class professional men who were quite wealthy. Not one of them was intimately connected with the trade unions or the working class. They did not 'pull such power' within the party and therefore they did not exercise much influence when the party was in office.

It is not really surprising that these experts on Africa and colonial policy were middle class intellectuals. The problem of colonialism, although an important one, was not one that was of much immediate appeal to the electorate. It did not have an immediate impact on ordinary people whose main concern was the problem of unemployment. Hence colonial policy was not emphasised in general election campaigns and manifestoes. The main work on colonial policy was done by the intellectuals on the A.C.I.Q. It was they who drafted the policy statements which were approved by the N.E.C. and party conferences.

The new policy statement produced by Woolf, Buxton, Ross and Drummond Shiels was very similar to the other two pamphlets. There was the same emphasis on the

difference between the systems in operation in East and West Africa - the differentiation between the 'African' policy and the 'capitalist' policy. The sections on land, labour, taxation and education were very similar to those in the earlier pamphlets. There was also the same belief in international control and the same cautious approach to self-government. In the African countries, it was stated, the 'people are in a condition which would make it impossible for them to take over the government of their country on modern lines. In such cases, what is required is education and preparation with the definite object of training the population in self-government.' 'The party will take the steps necessary to give self-government and "responsible government" in Asiatic and African territories only if, at the same time, the franchise can be given to the Native inhabitants on the same terms as to European minorities and only if it is assured that the Native inhabitants will have an effective voice in the government of the territory in question.'[1]

The new pamphlet expanded more on the question of the 'open door' than the others had done, owing to the fact that the National Government had negotiated the Ottawa Agreements the year before. The pamphlet stated its opposition to the agreements and preferential trade policies. Some mention was made of the work of the 1929-31 Labour Government in the pamphlet. It was stated that the government had made a start on dealing with the vested interests, which sought to make perpetual serfdom the lot of millions of intelligent and decent people in the colonies, by carrying through the Kenya Native Lands

1. Labour Party Policy Report No. 6 'The Colonies' (Transport House, August 1933), p.6.

Ordinance to prevent the expropriation of native lands, in spite of the bitter opposition of the white immigrant community.[1] It is significant that this was all that could be shown for 2 years work. The Ordinance was soon to be overthrown when gold was discovered in Kenya in the Kavirondo reserve.

The objectives of the Colonial Policy of the Labour Party, stated the pamphlet, could be summed up in two words - 'socialisation and self-government'.[2] The colonial administration should prepare the people for self-government by education, local self-government and the development of co-operative societies. The Labour party was a Socialist Party, declared the policy statement, and its aim was the establishment of socialism. There was considerable opportunity for the application of practical Socialism in the Colonies in State Railways, Medical Services, Public Works, etc. 'The development should be extended to the organisation of efforts to secure the economic well-being and security of the inhabitants along Socialist lines.' Conditions varied enormously within colonies. 'The Labour Government will, therefore, consider means for working out plans for socialisation and for promoting the economic interests of the Native inhabitants. In particular, consideration will be given to the steps which can be taken to make the local administrations both at the centre and in the provinces and districts more efficient in promoting these objects.'[3] Although the pamphlet said plans would be worked out for socialisation, the pamphlet itself did not give much consideration to the problems of economic

1. ibid.
2. ibid.
3. 'The Colonies', op.cit., p.6-7.

development.

The policy report was discussed at the Hastings Conference at the beginning of October I933. Mr.George Dallas moved the adoption of the Report on the Colonies for the Executive.He said that all the amendments had either been accepted or withdrawn so they had got a virtually unanimous Report.He paid tribute to Leonard Woolf who had been the Secretary of the Advisory Committee for fourteen years. 'No man could have rendered greater service, or more devoted service,to the people we are concerned with in this Report than Mr. Leonard Woolf;and not only Mr. Woolf, but Mr. Charles Roden Buxton,who has been Chairman of the Committee. We are very greatly indebted particularly to those two men,with their colleagues on the Committee,for the Report.' He hoped that the Report would be widely read when it was re-issued in a more attractive form by the trade unions and the constituency parties.[I]

In the Report they were dealing with the colonies- 'people for whose government everyone of us in this Hall,and everyone in the country is directly responsible.' The Government governed these people as truly as it governed every constituent part of Great Britain and in some respects it governed them even more directly. They were dealing with no less than 64 million people,[2] nearly one and a half times the population of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.The African living on his native soil constituted the major portion of Britain's responsibilities.There were 42 million Africans-approximately the population of Great Britain. Over a

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I.The Labour Party Conference Report,I933,Hastings,2-6 October I933, p.I99.

2. This figure does not include India.Apart from the colonies and protectorates in Africa,it includes those in Asia,America,Australasia and Europe.The figures are set out in 'The Colonial Empire'(The Labour Party,I933),pp.2I-22.

large part of Africa the 'natives' had become landless, they had no title in law over the land that their fathers had lived in for many thousands of years. Even in the portions of Africa which were owned and possessed by the 'natives', called 'native' reserves, the 'natives' had no guarantee that they were protected against eviction. If gold was discovered, or any other metals, they were liable to be turned out and lose all rights whatsoever. The 'natives' were looking to the British people for some change in the capitalist policy that had been pursued for the last 50 years. The 'natives' were compelled to pay taxes. In order to pay the taxes they had to work for the people who had taken their land. The money raised by taxation was not spent for the benefit of the 'natives'.[1]

Dallas then went on to make the familiar distinction between this policy and that which was pursued on the West Coast. 'In some of the West African Colonies no European can get any land whatever unless for the building of towns and town sites, and this policy has fundamentally different results. These results show the possibility of culture and development that the natives are capable of if they are given the chance.'[2] The Report stated that Britain should look upon herself as the guardian of the 'natives' in the Colonies. The principles of liberty and equality in the political, economic and social sense should be put into practice in Africa. 'We must go with the principle of fraternity, and in that profound sense we must say that as far as we are concerned we

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1. ibid., p.200
2. 1933 Conference Report, op.cit., p.200.

believe in Africa for the Africans, just as we believe in Britain for the British, and that the well-being of the Africans and the other people in our Colonies is the keynote of the policy of the British Labour Party.'[1]

The next speaker in the debate was Mr. William Lunn who had been one of Passfield's Under-Secretaries at the Colonial Office, for a brief period, during the Second Labour Government. He had been mainly concerned with the Dominions but, after the 1931 Election and the failure of many Labour M.P.s to return to Parliament, he had become the main spokesman on the Colonies. Sidney Webb, Lunn said, had been at the Colonial Office for two and a half years, during which time he had drafted and carried through a charter of freedom for the 'natives', the like of which had never been proposed in this country. Webb's 'Memorandum on Native Affairs' had been for Africans, or was intended to be for Africans a charter of liberty, guaranteed for all time in the future regarding their possessions. The present Government had already violated this charter by giving way to the settlers in Kenya when gold was found. The Labour Party should stand determinedly against that sort of thing. The question of the Colonies was a big one but it was not one that would fire the imagination and enthusiasm of the British electors at a General Election. 'It is not a question that will win for us a majority, but it is our duty, as trustees for the many millions of peoples who live in these vast Colonies of the British Empire to see that every right that there is should be assured and guaranteed to them.'[2]

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1. ibid., p.201.
2. ibid. Lunn emphasised the lack of electoral interest in the subject but pointed out that it was a subject of great importance, particularly, for the future.

Lunn hoped that when a Labour Government came to power, where land had been taken from the 'natives' it would be restored to its rightful owners. He took Nigeria as an example of a socialised colony. There was no private ownership in land, the railways and the coastwise traffic were owned by the people and, with Donald Cameron as Governor, Lunn believed that there would be no giving way to capitalist policies. Turning to the general question of self-government, Lunn thought that there was a good way to go before self-government or self determination could be established in many Colonies. The first principle was to educate the 'natives' and to see that educational facilities were provided for all ranks living in the British Empire. Whatever taxation the 'natives' pay ought to be spent in the interests of the 'natives'. There were educated 'natives' who were in a position to take over the control and government of their countries; one such was Tshekedi, the Acting-Chief of Bechuanaland whom Lunn had met. Lunn asked the conference to agree to the Report so that the Labour Party could take up the question of educating the 'natives', providing an adequate health service for them, restoring their land to them, ensuring that taxation should be fair, making labour conditions better and ending forced labour and slavery and ensuring that the 'natives' should have complete freedom. The adoption of the Report would show that the Labour Party was not a 'parish pump' party but was prepared to carry out its duty in all parts of the Empire and with all peoples with whose liberties Britain was entrusted.[1]

1. 1933 Conference Report, op.cit., p.201.

C.R. Buxton said that the Report was a charter of black men's rights. He thought that the Report was something more than the other reports. 'This is actually the third edition of Labour's policy for black men's rights. The first of our pamphlets was published, I think, in 1921, and I would like to mention the name of a great man who passed away, one who played a great part in that first edition of our policy - the late E.D.Morel. Then there was the second edition, which some of you know as "Labour and the Empire: Africa", which has been on sale for several years past, and on the first page of which some of the very finest observations on black men's rights are signed by the Rt. Hon.J.H. Thomas, M.P. After very careful consideration, extending over a long period of time, we have the third edition. This Policy Report has had very prolonged and careful consideration, and although some of us feel that things move slowly,[1] yet I think we may congratulate ourselves that in our Movement this subject of black man's rights is obtaining more and more attention every year.'[2] It was said that it was not a burning question in the sense that some others were, but Buxton prophesied that in ten years the problem of what is going to be done to secure the rights of our black and brown fellow citizens will be a burning question at Conference and all manner of questions would arise in connection with it. There had been singularly little trouble with regard to the primitive peoples of the Colonial Empire such as those in Africa because they had been docile and submissive to capitalistic exploitation. The next fifty years were not going to be as easy

1. Buxton appeared to be hinting at the disappointment that the A.C.I.Q. felt at Passfield's performance in office.
2. ibid., p.201-202.

as the last fifty had been. There were going to be all sorts of problems because there was a rising tide of national consciousness amongst these people and there was also industrial consciousness. It was a burning question not only for every citizen but for every worker because more and more the worker would be subjected to the competition of sweated black labour. That would lead to all manner of difficulties which only a socialist government could solve. 'Our fellow workers are our black and brown and yellow fellow workers, just as much as our white fellow workers. All that sentiment of solidarity which counts for so much in the world today should come with full force, not only to the white workers of the world, but to our black, brown and yellow fellow workers as well.'[1]

J.F. Horrabin, who had pressed Lord Passfield when in office on matters concerning the exploitation of Africans in West and East Africa, said that he was glad that the Executive had accepted the Report. He was particularly glad that an amendment had been accepted which added the words 'self-determination' to the short definition of the aims of the Labour party as regards the Colonies. After the sentence 'The objectives of the Colonial Policy of the Labour party may be summed up in two words - socialisation and self-government',[2] another sentence had been added: 'These are the preliminaries necessary to enable the exercise of that full self-determination which must be the basis of a true commonwealth.'[3] Horrabin was pleased that the word 'self-determination' had been used because it did

1. 1933 Conference Report, op.cit., p.202.
2. 'The Colonies', op.cit., p.4.
3. 'The Colonial Empire' (Transport House, November 1933), p.4.

imply to the subject peoples of the Empire a recognition of their rights as equals. Horrabin pointed out that the Britain that the Africans knew was the Britain of the exploiter. If they wanted the Africans to hear some other voice from Britain it would have to come from the Labour Movement. He hoped that the policy statement would not be treated merely as a programme for a future Labour government. He wanted the Labour Movement to make its voice heard and let the African know that he had friends and comrades in Great Britain.[1]

A trade unionist - Mr. G. Mathers of the Railway Clerks' Association - also spoke in the debate. He criticised the assumption that education was needed before people should be given the vote, he thought that what was required was 'gumption'. However, he did not say whether he considered that the Africans had 'gumption'. He was also unhappy with the section on trade and commerce entitled 'the Open Door'. He thought that complete free trade would take away revenue and lead to higher taxes on the 'natives'. He suggested that the policy should be altered, but this idea was not followed.[2]

The Rt. Hon. George Lansbury, M.P. summed up for the Executive. He paid tribute to Sidney Webb and 'the testament he left behind for our guidance'. He stated that his views on these affairs had been gathered from having learned that 'Livingstone, Colenzo - both the Bishop and his daughter - Roger Casement, Nevinson and E.D. Morel, all walked through Africa without any machine guns to protect them, but only the goodwill they carried with them and the comradeship which they spread about them.'[3]

1. 1933 Conference Report, ibid., p.202.
2. ibid., p.203.
3. ibid., p.203.

The debate has been outlined in detail because it illustrated the Labour party's approach to colonial problems. The speakers were aware that the issue was not going to win the party any votes at a General Election but they emphasised that it would become a question of increasing importance in the future. Passfield's period of office was generally glossed over with occasional mention of the Kenya Land Ordinance and the 'Memorandum on Native Policy' but no mention was made of the fact that the 'Memorandum' had not been enforced. The Ordinance was soon ignored when gold was discovered in Kenya. The speeches, in general, were expository and self-congratulatory. However, the policy was still rather vague; there was no detailed discussion of the time period envisaged before independence could be given in the African colonies and dependencies, only Horrabin emphasised that self-determination was the aim of the Labour party's policy. The speakers reiterated the party's 'conventional wisdom' that everything was 'almost perfect' in West Africa. They seem to have completely ignored the troubles that had occurred in West Africa during Passfield's period at the Colonial Office and they did not appreciate the problems that had developed in West Africa, as a result of the world slump and the depression in the price of primary products. The speeches did not address themselves in any detail to the problems of economic development in Africa. The impression was given that all that needed to be done in Africa was to apply the 'West African' policy to 'East Africa' and the main problems would be solved. The debate highlighted the fact that Labour's

colonial policy had not developed significantly from the pamphlet which had been written in 1920. Despite the rhetoric about 'socialisation and self-government', there was little indication of how either would be achieved. As far as colonial policy was concerned, the Labour party's rethink after the failure of 1929-1931 had come up with exactly the same policies which had been outlined a decade earlier. There was strikingly little development in the Labour party's colonial policy between 1920 and 1933. The Party's attitude towards economic development and indirect rule was still ambiguous and there was still an assumption that the Africans could not be consulted about colonial policy. There was no suggestion that there should be consultations with African leaders, who were beginning to emerge, about the best policy for the Labour party to pursue in Africa. After the Conference, the policy Report was published as 'The Colonial Empire'[1] which was then the official statement of the party's colonial policy.

The pamphlet was criticised by the I.L.P. At the I.L.P. Conference in Blackpool in March 1932, the I.L.P. had defined its international objectives. 'The I.L.P. will combat with all its power Imperialism and all its works. It stands for complete self-determination and self-government for all subject peoples recognising their inalienable right to complete independence. It seeks to further by every means in its power effective international co-operation between the workers organisations of all countries for common action on the militant socialist policies outlined in this

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1. 'The Colonial Empire' (Transport House, 1933)

programme.'[1] Taking this point-of-view as its basis for considering colonial issues, 'The New Leader' published an article by Reginald Reynolds on the Labour party's colonial policy, entitled 'Bossing the Empire.'[2]

In this article, Reynolds stated that the imperialism of the Labour party had been under heavy fire in recent years, and the Party Bosses had found it impossible to ignore this criticism. The report on the colonies was a clumsy effort to disarm criticism, by admitting the more obvious evils of Empire, whilst seeking to justify a reformist 'remedy' which would consolidate and stabilise the whole Imperialist system. The real object of the Labour party was to meet the 'danger to British occupation' by making Imperialism more efficient. To the Labour party Boss, Imperialism was evil not because of its injustice but because of its nakedness - because it aroused resentment and revolt in the minds of the workers. The Labour party plan varied from a continuation of the dictatorship of the Crown in the African colonies to some vague and patronising proposals for 'a large measure of self-government' in the case of the West Indies 'whose people are probably already capable of managing their own affairs'.

Reynolds continued that the Labour party had no proposal to give back the land stolen by capitalists; still less was there any hint at that racial equality which was the very life-blood of socialism. The British were to go on ruling, and the 'Negroes' to go on being ruled, until some official in Transport House, in the

1. I.L.P. Conference Report 1932, Blackpool, March 1932, pp.61-62.
2. 'The New Leader', 15 September 1933, p.8.

distant future, announces that they are 'fit' for self-government, as if they were 'pigs being fattened for the market.' This self-appointed 'trusteeship' was simply the White Man's Burden of Kipling's Empire, without so much as a new wrapper. Evidently, Transport House considered that Britain's European civilisation fitted her to assume a role superior to a race that was so simple-minded as to believe the land to be the property of the community. Reynolds said that there was little mention of the Labour party's record in office except a reference to the petty reformist Kenya Ordinance - a miserable concession to stave off revolt - in which the Report took great pride. There was much humbug about 'mandates' and the usual pretence, which had been torn to shreds a dozen times, that the West African colonies were administered for the benefit of the 'natives'. 'The essential difference between the theory of Socialism and Fascism is that one organises from the bottom, the other imposes from the top. Labour's Empire policy is the theory of fascism disguised in Gladstonian rags.'[1]

The Labour party's policy was also attacked by Ralph Fox, in 'The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism'.[2] Taking as his starting point Marx's dictum that 'a people which enslaves another people forges its own chains', he stated that 'it cannot be too stongly emphasised that in so far as they have participated in the plunder of the colonies, the English working class have strengthened their oppressors and weakened their own chances of freedom.'[3] The Labour

1. 'New Leader', 15 September 1933, p.8.
2. R. Fox, 'The Colonial Policy of British Imperialism' (London 1933), pp108-118.
3. ibid., p.108.

party had never been a party of the working class, it was an alliance between the aristocracy of Labour and the petty bourgeoisie. It had remained more faithful to the ideals of the capitalist class in the colonial question than in any other. The reason for this was that the Empire was the real corner-stone of British capitalism. By its failure to do anything about the Empire in its total of three and a half years of government, the Labour party showed itself to be wedded to the capitalist system. Its period of government had left forced labour untouched, and had failed to emancipate a single child slave, but instead had imprisoned many thousands, hanged scores, and shot down hundreds with bomb or machine gun, including women.

The 1933 Policy Report, according to Fox, had no complaint to make against colonial exploitation as such, only against certain phases of it mostly connected with the plantation system in East Africa. 'Extraordinary as it may seem, after the picture of conditions in West Africa given by the women's movement in Nigeria, West Africa is held up as the ideal of "socialist" colonisation.'[1] Fox thought it was true that the West African peasant was better off than the plantation slave of Kenya, but he was still not well off. 'The facts are that the peasants of West Africa are grossly exploited by the British imperialist monopolies who buy their produce and by the feudal land-owning system which British imperialism has developed. The peasant, though he is not taxed in such a way as to force him to abandon his land and work for a white plantation owner (as in East Africa), is nevertheless, as British officials themselves admit,

1. ibid., p.112.

grossly overtaxed. The fact that the native courts use flogging to enforce payment of taxes....is additional and overwhelming evidence of this. Native landlordism exists and is growing, even the plantation system exists to some extent. In every sense of the word the policy pursued by imperialism in West Africa is a capitalist policy and so long as capitalism exists in England and the existence of such giant monopolies as Unilever continues, it will remain a capitalist policy.'[1]

Fox was unimpressed by the Labour party's proposals on land. In West and East Africa great tracts of land had been simply stolen by white settlers or syndicates. Nothing would happen in these cases, for all that the Labour party said was that no further land should be alienated; it was not going to do anything about land that had already been alienated. It had said that where 'too much' land had been alienated, governments must be prepared to resume ownership but it was not stated what 'too much' meant or who was to determine whether 'too much' land had been alienated. According to Fox, every inch of stolen land was too much and the blood and suffering of the 'natives' had paid the 'price of civilisation' a million times over. He found it interesting that the next Labour Government would prohibit slavery since apparently the last two had overlooked it, and that forced and contract labour would not be abolished but allowed only on the best 'socialist' principles. Fox was also surprised to find that 'trade unions' questions such as the 8-hour day, factory conditions, and wages, were not mentioned in the code. He was sceptical that the workers of the colonies were

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1. Fox., op.cit., p.113.

enjoying 'socialism' in some respects in the form of state railways, medical services, public works, etc.[1]

These criticisms of Labour's policy, although exaggerated, did contain some truth. The Labour party was blind to the problems in West Africa. This was mainly due to Leonard Woolf but his opinions on West Africa were accepted and supported by the other members of the A.C.I.Q. He re-issued his book, 'Imperialism and Civilisation' in 1933, again emphasising that 'only in the British possessions on the West coast have the material interests of the natives been protected against the exploitation of the white man.'[2] However, he did admit that 'nowhere had any real attempt been made to fulfil the....obligation of education.' Woolf's conclusion was that 'a revolt of Africa will be far more terrible than that of Asia. The only way of avoiding that catastrophe is to refuse to follow the road taken by imperialism in South Africa and now pointed out for us in Kenya, and to choose the road already traced out for us in British West Africa.'[3] The policy of reforming the African empire was a viable one, if a consistent and logical policy for reform was thought out; and if a determined attempt was made to implement it

1. ibid., pp.113-114.
2. L. Woolf, 'Imperialism and Civilisation', (London, 1928 revised ed. 1933), pp.82-92. Leys came back after a visit to the Gold Coast thinking that the people there were the 'most fortunate in Africa'. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 115, 'The Gold Coast', N. Leys. He agreed with Woolf that what was 'chiefly needed was the application to East Africa of the experience of West Africa'. 'New Statesman', 15 April 1933, p.471. Leys' visit to West Africa seems to have convinced him of the 'good fortune' of the Africans in West Africa compared to those in East Africa. C.R. Buxton was also full of praise for the Gold Coast after a visit. Manchester Guardian, 7 January 1935, p.9.
3. L. Woolf, ibid., p.92.

when the party was in office. The problem was that the Labour party's policy was rather ambiguous and did not make clear what policies would be taken immediately by a Labour Colonial Secretary to put the policy into effect. A major difference between the Labour party and the I.L.P. in the thirties was that whereas the I.L.P. seemed willing to treat the Africans as equals, many Labour politicians seemed to regard the Africans as incapable of helping themselves. The impression was given that they would have to wait until 'London' deemed them 'ready' to be given a say in their future. This was why Reynolds thought that the Labour party's empire policy was 'the theory of fascism disguised in Gladstonian rags'. This was unfair but there was an element of truth in it. It was unfair because there were people in the Labour party such as Leys and Leonard Barnes, who did regard the African as a potential equal. This section of the Labour party had been weakened when the I.L.P. left the party because with it left people like Fenner Brockway who were dedicated to equal rights. The people remaining in the Labour party, like Leys and Leonard Barnes, were not, however, in the mainstream of Labour party politics and did tend to be ignored by the official leadership. The element of truth in Reynold's quotation was that many Labour leaders did give the impression that the Africans could not do much for themselves and would be waiting for independence for many years, if not centuries. The Labour party's policy was 'paternalist'. There was nothing wrong with this but the impression was given, by people like Passfield, that they did not envisage that the Africans would 'come of age' in the near future. The party did not seem to be taking

vigorous steps to ensure that the period of 'paternalist' rule would be as short as possible. The party had failed in the twenties to convey the impression, either in office or in opposition, that it was determined to reform the empire. In office, it seemed reluctant to differ from the advice of civil servants, and, in opposition, only a few M.P.s seemed concerned about the problems of Africa. The party's record in opposition in the thirties will now be studied to ascertain whether a more determined attempt was made to protect African interests than in the twenties.

In the early thirties, East Africa was again the main point of contention in Parliament. The main issues were those arising out of the Report of the Joint Committee.[1] Drummond Shiels thought that the Report showed a progressive spirit and could form a basis on which an enlightened political and administrative system could be built up in East Africa. The Report and the working out of its recommendations would provide a breathing space to sort out the problems of Kenya.[2] However, Norman Leys was not so optimistic. He thought that the decision of the Select Committee to refuse to hear the delegates chosen and sent at great cost by the Africans themselves was deplorable.[3] The Report, with its shelving of the problem of closer union left things more-or-less as they were. Leys thought that the fact that nothing had been done in Kenya and East Africa to put into effect the policies of 'The Memorandum on Native

1. Joint Committee on Closer Union in East Africa, Vol. 1, Report, H.C.156 (1931)
2. 'The East Africa Report' Drummond Shiels, Political Quarterly, Vol. 3, January - March 1933.
3. N. Leys, 'A Last Chance in Kenya' (London, 1931), p.12.

Policy' would drive the Africans to adopt more extreme policies in order to force the government to take some action. He wrote of the Labour period of office: 'It would be unjust to assume that these Labour Ministers (Passfield and Shiels) have turned their backs on what have been the principles of the party since its foundation. But they have allowed themselves to be misunderstood. All over Africa the news has gone out that the Labour Government has recanted.'[1]

The main results of the work of the Joint Committee were that a number of Commissions were appointed to investigate problems in East Africa. A financial commission under Lord Moyne[2] was set up in early 1932. This travelled to and fro East Africa by air and its report was quickly concluded, being published in June 1932.[3] The second Royal Commission to be appointed by the new Colonial Secretary, Cunliffe-Lister, was the Morris Carter Commission on Land. It began work in England in the summer of 1932, spent eleven months in Kenya, and then returned to England to resume hearings in July 1933. The report was eventually published in May 1934 in a 618 page volume, with three additional volumes of evidence.[4] The third Royal Commission, the Bushe Commission, was relatively unimportant. It was appointed to 'inquire into the administration of the criminal law in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika

1. ibid., p.141.
2. Lord Moyne, as Lt-Col. Guiness, had made a strong attack on the Indians in Kenya and stated that the interests of the Europeans and Africans were complementary.
3. Report by the Financial Commissioner, Cmd.4093(1932).
4. Report of the Kenya Land Commission, Cmd.4556(1934).

Territory.' Its Report appeared in 1934.[1]

Norman Leys wrote a memo for the A.C.I.Q. on the setting up of the Commissions. He thought that the Colonial Office had acted on the advice of the Joint Select Committee with apparent thoroughness. No fault could be found with the terms of reference but the personnel of the Commissions was likely to produce reports favourable to the settlers. The Land Commission included a settler and an ex-judge of Tanganyika - men who had vested interests in East Africa. Leys thought that nothing would ever come of Commissions until there was a Labour government with the courage to appoint to Commissions men and women who were ready to make a break with the past.[2] This was the main point; Commissions would never change the system in Africa, if they were dominated by members sympathetic to the status quo. Both Thomas and Passfield had failed to appoint Commissions and Committees with a radical membership.

Leys' point of view was expressed in the House of Commons by Labour speakers. Mr. Lunn, Labour's main colonial spokesman in the House, stated on 1 July 1932, 'we are profoundly disappointed at the constitution of the Morris Carter Commission which is to enquire into the land question in Kenya. In my opinion, the Commission is overloaded in the interests of settlers, and we asked on the last occasion and we ask now that there should be

1. Report of Commissioner of Inquiry into the Administratinn of Justice, etc., Cmd. 4623 (London,1932)
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 99, May 1932, 'East Africa: Appointment of Commissions' by N. Leys. N. Leys' resignation from the A.C.I.Q. failed to force Passfield to take positive action in East Africa. When the Labour party was back in opposition, Leys was soon sending the A.C.I.Q. memos but he did not attend meetings again until after the 1935 Election.

placed on it a representative of native interests.'[1]

The report of Lord Moyne had been received by 1 July 1932. Lord Moyne had been asked to enquire into the contribution to taxation of each racial community, the amount of government expenditure in the interests of each community in Kenya, the effect of railway freight and import duties on each community, the degree to which financial responsibility should be conferred on the Native Councils and the Colony's general economic situation. The report showed that Kenya was suffering severely from the economic depression and for several years had been unable to balance her budget. It showed that the Africans had paid an ample contribution to revenue considering the services provided in return. Moyne stated that, in contrast, the settlers enjoyed 'all the amenities of civilisation in return for a relatively light scale of contribution'. The A.C.I.Q. had been proved correct, in pointing out that the Africans were unfairly treated. There was a per capita expenditure of 15.8s on Asiatics, 198.0s on Europeans and 0.2s on Africans.[2]

Moyne recommended some changes in Kenya's financial policy towards all the communities. In order to improve the financial situation of the Africans, he recommended the establishment of a Native Betterment Committee to finance and co-ordinate direct African services of education, health, agriculture and roads. He thought that railway rates should be reduced on cheap cotton cloth and blankets, hut tax should be replaced by a cultivation tax and there should be

1. House of Commons Reports, Fifth Series, Vol.267, cols. 2135-2136, 1 July 1932.
2. Report by the Financial Commissioner, Cmd. 4093 (1932), p.24.

variation in the amount of tax falling on the African according to the taxable capacity of each district. Moyne thought that the Asians and the Europeans were not contributing a fair share of revenue. They were in the probably unparallelled position of bearing no direct taxation except a male poll tax of 30s., a male education tax of 20 or 30s., and a comparatively light scale of death duties. Moyne's major recommendation was that a 'non-native' income tax should be imposed.[1] This was what the Labour party advisory committee had been recommending for years.

In the Commons, Lunn said that he thought the report was a good one. 'He never fails to let you know that taxation is very unfairly levied on the natives and that, in all the economies, they have had to bear the lion's share, sometimes, he feared with possible danger to the health and well-being of the native community.'[2] Cunliffe-Lister, the National Government Colonial Secretary, also thought that the report was worth accepting. As a result, the Governor, Sir Joseph Byrne, announced soon after the publication of the report that income tax would be introduced. This led to pressure from the Europeans. The European members on the Legislative Council protested, petitions were presented to the Governor, resolutions were passed, alternative forms of taxation were suggested. Lord Francis Scott, leader of the elected members, flew to London to present a petition of the Convention of Associations[3] to the Colonial Secretary and demand a statutory finance committee on which Europeans would have

1. Report of the Financial Commissioner, Cmd.4093, pp.29-30, 60-2.
2. House of Commons Reports, Fifth Series, Vol. 267, cols. 2136-2137, 1 July 1932.
3. A settler organisation.

a majority. On 7 June 1933, the Secretary of State gave way and ordered the Governor to abandon the bill and give a trial to the Europeans' suggestion of an alternative tax. The settlers had won what they termed as 'the greatest constitutional victory in the history of the Colony.'[1] This proved that the settlers' interests were still paramount in Kenya.

In Parliament, the Labour party was strongly critical of Cunliffe-Lister's action. Lunn stated that 'those in the colony started on the warpath; they were determined that they would not pay. They were out to oppose any measures of taxation with determination and they succeeded.' The new proposals would not raise the same amount as Lord Moyne had recommended should be raised. Lunn was astonished that Lord Moyne had agreed to the proposals.[2] He 'had imagined that the Government would be consistent and would carry out the policy that they declared to the House, and that they would not change their opinion, and be influenced as they are, by rich men who happen to be able to dominate them and have dominated Governments before. Yet we find that the right hon. Gentleman lets down the Government, lets down all his agents, and that the Governor has to announce that he has received instructions from the Secretary of State which are new, and which provide for this alternative system of taxation, though there is no guarantee that it will raise the money required. The right hon. Gentleman has surrendered weakly to the obstruction. No-one can be satisfied with his action, and no-one can admire his action in dealing

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1. Quoted, 'India and East Africa', R.G. Gregory, (Oxford, 1971), p.428.
2. Lord Moyne was consulted by Cunliffe-Lister about the new proposals.

with this question of income tax in Kenya. I wonder what the millions of Africans feel regarding his nervous compliance with the resistance in Kenya.'[1] Settler protest again prevented positive policies being put forward to improve the position of the Africans. The fear of protests from the settlers had been a major reason why Thomas and Passfield had not introduced a common electoral roll in Kenya.

The other major controversy between the parties in this period concerning the colonies in Africa was over land and the Morris Carter Report. As has been said, the Labour party took particular exception to the composition of the Committee. Carter, the chairman, was a former Chief Justice of Tanganyika and had investigated Rhodesian land problems. The second member, R.W. Hemsted, had been Kenya's Chief Commissioner for many years. The third and final member, Captain F.O.B. Wilson, was a prominent European settler. In an article discussing the appointment of the land commission, the 'New Statesman' particularly criticised Wilson.[2] The Commission had been set up to inquire into the needs of the African population for more land, to investigate and make recommendations for settling African claims for wrongful dis-possessions and to demarcate the white highlands within which Europeans 'enjoyed a privileged position'. It was stated that Captain Wilson should not be a member. He might have to adjudicate claims to land on which he was living. He was a well-known supporter of the Delamere line that unalienated land

1. House of Commons Reports, Fifth Series, Vol. 280, cols. 1446-1448, 14 July 1933.
2. 'New Statesman', 21 May 1932, p.653, 'Kenya Land Committee'.

should be thrown open to European settlement. The article concluded that 'it is a matter for keen regret that the natives of Kenya have no independent representatives, who cannot be officially silenced, to voice their interests and grievances. Today they are virtually unrepresented, muzzled, docketed and ticketed in their own country, and unable to find any channel for the transmission of their real wishes, hopes and fears. The greatest protection they could have would be an autonomous administrator able to fight for them without fear, negotiate for them on equal terms, and see justice done.' This point of criticism of Captain Wilson was put by Mr. Morgan Jones in the House of Commons.[1]

Between the announcement of the Land Commission and its report, the issue of the gold discovered on the Kavirondo native reserve developed. The land was taken by the Europeans in order to prospect for gold. This was contrary to the provisions of the Native Land Trust Ordinance which the Labour government had passed to prevent further expropriation of native lands. In its policy statement, 'The Colonial Empire', the Labour party stated that this breach of the Native Land Trust Ordinance was evidence, 'not only of the forces against which we have to work, but of the need of a powerful and majority Labour government to secure justice for the African inhabitants of Kenya.'[2]

The A.C.I.Q. discussed the matter on 19 October 1932 and decided that McGregor Ross and Leonard Woolf should prepare a memo on the gold prospecting in Kenya.[3] The memo proposed that the government should reserve to itself all

1. House of Commons Reports, Fifth Series, Vol.267, cols. 2191-2192, 1 July 1932.
2. 'The Colonial Empire', The Labour Party 1933, p.4.
3. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 19 October 1932.

the mineral rights in the 'Native Reserves' and then do the prospecting for itself if gold was discovered in paying quantities. This should be done with the minimum of disturbance to African land rights. Any profits should be used to make good the disturbance and, secondly, for the general good and development of the country and its people.[1] The memo was discussed by the A.C.I.Q. on 2 November 1932 and it was decided that it was suitable for M.P.s and was forwarded to the National Executive Committee.[2]

McGregor Ross later wrote to the Cardiff Trades and Labour Council that it was 'odious misrepresentation for the Colonial Office to maintain that the rights of the native population in the Kenya goldfields have been in no way infringed'. Africans had been deprived of portions of their farm lands, some large, some small, in thousands of cases.[3] N. Leys thought that Kenya was governed by men whose values were completely upside down and the man in charge had been appointed by a Labour Minister: 'I don't mind knaves in a Labour Government. Some there must be. But why fools?'[4]

The National government allowed European settlers to take over the land and prospect for the gold. The issue was discussed in both Houses of Parliament on 8 February 1933. Lunn, in the House of Commons, moved an amendment to a National government-inspired motion approving of the alienation of land. His amendment stated that "in Kenya, (the

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1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 110, November 1932, 'Gold in the Kavirondo Reserve, Kenya'.
2. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 2 November 1932.
3. McGregor Ross to Cardiff Trades and Labour Council, 26 June 1933, McGregor Ross Papers.
4. N. Leys to W. Holtby, 16 October 1932, W. Holtby Papers Drawer 4, File 8.

government) should develop the resources of that country for the benefit of the native races, and in so doing must ensure that any native, dispossessed of territory which has been solemnly reserved for native occupation in accordance with the pledged word of H.M.G., has an equivalent area of land provided outside the native reserves, and that the whole of the profits derived from the minerals discovered shall accrue to the Government in the interests of the native population."[1]

Lord Passfield was speaking on the same day in the House of Lords.[2] He received some able help in attacking the National Government's policy over the goldfields from the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Lugard. They regarded the Government's action as a definite breach of the solemn pledge that had been given in 1930 in the Native Lands Trust Ordinance. Lord Passfield observed that the pledge was not questioned during the whole proceedings of the Joint Committee which went into the whole question. As far as he remembered not one witness from Kenya or anywhere else ever suggested that the pledge ought not to have been given or in any way objected to the pledge. The inviolability of the reserves was accepted.

There were three points in regard to which there had been a breach of faith. First, there was the abstraction from the reserves without equivalent land being added. Secondly, there was abstraction from the reserves for the private profit of individuals of another race. The White Paper of 1930 had said that on no account would any natives be ousted from the reserves for the private profit of any individual.[3] It was only for public purposes that there

1. House of Commons Reports, Fifth Series, Vol. 274, col. 198, 8 February 1933.
2. House of Lords Reports, Vol. 86, cols. 576-585, 8 February 1933.
3. Cmd. 3573 (June, 1930), Memorandum on Native Policy in East Africa, p.10.

was a probability that they might be ousted, and those public purposes were specified. 'Certainly the suggestion that a joint stock company should work the goldfields for profit is an absolute breach of that pledge.'[1] There was also the breach of the pledge that if, for public purposes, land had to be taken then equivalent land should be given. He was sure that there was ample land available in the colony for an equivalent area to be added to the reserve. To say that there was no land available was untrue. However, the fact that Passfield's ordinance could be so easily overturned showed that Passfield had made no real change in the situation in East Africa when he was Colonial Secretary.

The subject was returned to in the House of Commons on the Colonial Office vote for 1933. Lunn again attacked the National Government's decision to allow private prospecting for gold. No Africans were allowed to prospect because a permit cost 20s. and, even if they could afford the permit, they still had to understand English sufficiently to translate the mining ordinance. There was a penalty for obstructing a miner of £300 or three years imprisonment. There were no regulations to protect the 'natives'. Lunn declared that if mining was carried on it should be under strict regulations and the interests of the 'natives' should be safeguarded. The Labour party would continue to expose the actions of the Colonial Secretary until they secured for the 'natives' what they believed to be their rights in their own country.[2]

The Labour party's opposition to the private mining of gold in the Kavirondo Reserve did not lead to a reversal of

1. House of Lords, ibid., col. 578.
2. House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, Vol. 280, cols. 1449-1450, 14 July 1933.

the National Government's policy. This is hardly surprising for an Opposition rarely changes government's policies, especially when the Opposition is so numerically feeble as it was in the early 1930s. However, the Labour party had showed some concern about African interests. This may have made Africans view it in a more favourable light than had been the case after its period of office. Lunn and Morgan Jones were the main Labour speakers on Labour Colonial policy during this period. Colonel Wedgwood was still in Parliament and making speeches on the subject, but he seemed to get less and less official Labour party recognition. He was becoming very much a backbencher who had no hope of ever achieving office. He was 'persona non grata' with the National Executive Committee. His name had appeared on a list of prospective members of the A.C.I.Q., but the N.E.C. had resolved 'that the list should be approved, with the exception of the deletion of the Rt. Hon. J.C. Wedgwood, M.P., from the A.C.I.Q.'[1]

Leys writes that Wedgwood was becoming 'a little deaf and difficult' because of his disappointments as a politician.[2] However, the N.E.C.'s decision to exclude him from the A.C.I.Q. was very unfair. Wedgwood was one of the most fearless fighters for African rights that the Labour party possessed. He was shabbily treated by the party.

Another issue concerning land rights which the Labour party thought was important was the issue of the North Charterland area of Northern Rhodesia. The Labour party's pamphlet on colonial policy, 'The Colonial Empire', stated that the 'inhabitants of a country nearly as large as Belgium,

1. National Executive Committee Minutes, 16 December 1931.
2. N. Leys to W. Holtby, 22 October 1932, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.

though officially certified to be the owners, have been deprived of nearly two-thirds of their land and are compelled to pay taxes which can only be earned by working for those who have taken their land from them.'[1]

The A.C.I.Q. wrote a memorandum on the question.[2] The North Charterland Exploration Company claimed areas in North East Rhodesia. On 22 March 1928 the Colonial Office Order-in-Council claimed that the Company's title to the land was invalid. This led to controversy and the setting up of an Inquiry. The Inquiry found that the Company had got a good title to the land, but this was subject to an obligation to set aside Native Reserves. The memo stated that it appeared that the 35% allotted to the 'natives' might be further reduced. It also followed that the land in North East Rhodesia was not the property of the 'natives' but of the administering body, to be disposed of as it willed.

The memo was considered at the meeting of the A.C.I.Q. on 2 November 1932,[3] and it was agreed to circulate the memo to the Executive committee. The A.C.I.Q. also decided to draw the attention of the Executive Committee to the line taken by the 'Daily Herald' on the North Charterland Company and to point out that it was surprising to find a Labour newspaper supporting the claims of the shareholders in a Company, the interests of which were contrary to those of the Africans. The matter was discussed by the National Executive Committee's international sub-committee on 10 November 1932.[4] The committee agreed that the policy of the 'Daily Herald' in the matter was inexplicable and

1. 'The Colonial Empire', op.cit., p.9.
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo 109, October 1932, 'Northern Rhodesia: North Charterland'.
3. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 2 November 1932.
4. N.E.C. Minutes, 10 November 1932.

recommended the Executive to consider the advisability of making appropriate representations through the proper channels.

The Labour party added the fact that the Company owned the land in Northern Rhodesia to its list of the African grievances in East Africa. On issues such as this the party was very dependent on the A.C.I.Q. because very few people knew anything about them. The A.C.I.Q. grip on the Labour party's colonial policy when the party was out of office is shown by the fact that it managed to get the 'Daily Herald' rebuked for following a different line.

The Morris Carter report was published in May 1934.[1] The Commission defined the highlands, which were to be reserved for exclusive White use in Kenya, as consisting of 16,500 square miles of which 3,950 was forest reserve. The Commission argued that 'it is a fair and reasonable arrangement, in the particular circumstances of the case to reserve agricultural land in the higher and cooler areas for Europeans while allowing the Indians and Arabs to take up land in the lower and warmer climates to which they are accustomed in their own land.'[2] The Commission recommended some changes in the boundaries of 'native reserves' and also thought that some areas outside the reserves should be set aside for lease to Africans. The rest of Kenya was to be available to all the communities in Kenya, African, European and Indian. An addition of 1,500 acres to the North Kavirondo Reserve was recommended to compensate for any surface land excluded from the Reserve for mining leases in the future. It also recommended an alternative system of mining leases. It also thought that the Land Trust Board in Kenya should be abolished and superseded by a Board appointed by Order in

1. Report of the Kenya Land Commission, Cmd. 4556, (May, 1934).
2. ibid., p.91.

Council, and a tentative recommendation was made that the new Board should sit in London. The National Government discussed the proposals in a White Paper, which was issued simultaneously with the Report.[1] The Colonial Secretary accepted the recommendations in regard to the proposed additions of land to the reserves and he also accepted the definition of the boundaries of the European Highlands. Concerning the Land Trust Board, the Colonial Secretary thought that it must be a local board as in the past but its future composition was under consideration.

The A.C.I.Q. decided to ask Norman Leys and McGregor Ross to eachsubmit a memo on the report.[2] Norman Leys wrote in his memo that 'with a few minor exceptions the areas proposed to be added to the Reserves are devoid of permanent streams and uninhabitable by peasant families.'[3] The areas that the Commission would add to the reserves were so worthless that, though they had always been uninhabited, no European had ever applied for land in them. 'No European would be such a fool as to accept land of that type as a free gift.' The real authority would rest with the Land Boards which would be composed of Europeans. This was ignoring the lesson that history had taught in India and elsewhere that where self-government was first derided, then feared, it was finally grudgingly given to people to whom Britain had allowed no opportunities to prepare themselves for so difficult a task. Leys thought that the Africans would repudiate the Report on the ground that the lands offered them in place of the lands that had been stolen from them were in general worthless, and that they themselves were not given even the hope of future

1. Kenya Land Commission Report: Summary of Conclusions reached by H.M.G., Cmd. 4580 (May, 1934).
2. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 16 May 1934.
3. N. Leys 'Memo on the Kenya Land Commission' A.C.I.Q. No. 136, May 1934.

control of their reserves. The Labour party should make it clear that it did not accept the decisions of the Commission as final and, that in regard to tribal lands, it would respect only decisions to which popular opinion freely expressed was given. Of even greater importance than the fate of the lands still in tribal occupation was the fact that in regard to land, as in everything else in Kenya, Africans were denied civil liberties. No African in Kenya, or group of Africans, owned or leased an acre of land. The law deliberately made it impossible. Leys returned to his favourite theme, stating that one of the measures that the next Labour Colonial Secretary should put into effect as soon as he achieved office should be to require the Governments of all the Imperial Dependencies to give their 'native' inhabitants the same rights and opportunities to buy and lease land in every part of their country as Europeans enjoyed. However, the right to buy and lease land, was only one of elementary human right that the Africans in Kenya were refused.

McGregor Ross's memo was written in more subdued language than that of Leys.[1] Ross thought that the oustanding fact in the report was that the Africans who were proved to have lost hundreds of square miles of land were to get practically none of it back. The Africans were not to get back their old lands which in some cases remained entirely unused. On the contrary, the inviolability of the outside boundary of the white settlement area was to be established by Order-in-Council. The Labour party had questioned the composition of the Commission when it was announced and was explicitly relieved from any complicity in its operations. There were some points on which the

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1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 138, 'The Morris Carter Land Report' McGregor Ross, June 1934.

Commission deserved credit: they did state that some land should be added to the native reserves and they had exploded the idea that the Natives Lands Trust Board had been, or could be, an adequate guardian of the rights of Africans. But the settlement suggested in the case of the land-losses of the Kikuyu tribe, which was the tribe most heavily victimised, was entirely bogus. The land was low-lying, hot and malarious and the Kikuyu would regard the offer of this land with derision and accept it only under compulsion. The fact that the areas to be given to the Kikuyu tribe in respect of their claims were empty after 30 or more years of land-grabbing spoke for itself.

Ross wrote that no tribe or section of the Kenya African population should be stampeded into concurrence with the Commission's rather mean proposals. African comment should be awaited and considered before action was taken. Ross thought, as Leys did, that a Labour Government should withdraw the exclusive European possession of the highlands and allow the Africans to buy in the open market anywhere in the colony. He did not think that the major forest areas should be included in the 'European highlands'. All minerals discovered on 'native' lands should be worked in the 'natives' interests. (The Commission had recommended that some lands should pass from the classification 'Crown Lands' to 'Native Lands'.) Ross thought that the Commission's remedial steps concerning the Kakamega gold scandal were inadequate and the Labour party should not regard itself as bound by the Commission's proposals. In conclusion, McGregor Ross stated that the Commission had nowhere faced the contention, which he had put before it, that the 'whole exploit of the monopolisation of the land

of the colony was an act of force majeure in violation of the tenets of international law.'[1]

The A.C.I.Q. considered these memos at a meeting on 6 June 1934 and decided that McGregor Ross should draft a memo for submission to the Executive Committee.[2] The N.E.C. decided that there should be a meeting of its international sub-committee and the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. At a meeting on 26 February 1935 the memo on the Kenya Land Commission was discussed. During the discussion it was urged that the party should make a formal declaration to the effect that it dissociated itself from the Morris Carter Report, as this step would be of great value, particularly in Kenya. It was resolved 'that a declaration to this effect, to be drafted in consultation with Mr. Lansbury and the Parliamentary party, be issued.'[3]

Norman Leys published his opinions concerning the Commission in the 'New Statesman'.[4] His article appeared on 28 July 1934. He made the same points as he had made in his memo for the A.C.I.Q. The Kikuyu had lost good land and were to be given bad land in its place. 1,029,422 Kavirondo were restricted to a reserve of 7,114 sq.miles, while 7,000 Europeans possessed 16,700 sq. miles of good land. He concluded by stating that "on the day when a Labour government has the courage shown by the British government of exactly a century ago, when it compelled the government of Jamaica to grant to its black inhabitants the same rights in law as its white inhabitants enjoyed.. on that day this report will be obsolete." On colonial

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 138, p.4.
2. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 6 June 1934.
3. N.E.C. Minutes, 26 February 1935.
4. 'New Statesman', 28 July 1934, 'Report of the Kenya Land Commission', N. Leys.

problems most of the articles written in the official Labour press, if any articles were written at all, were written by people who were members of, or connected with, the A.C.I.Q. 'The New Statesman' published articles by Norman Leys, Lord Olivier and Leonard Woolf. Before the I.L.P. left the Labour party, the 'New Leader' relied mainly on Norman Leys for its articles on African colonial problems. In the 1930s, it relied upon writers further to the left such as Reginald Reynolds and George Padmore. 'The Daily Herald' very rarely contained any general articles on colonial problems, although it did occasionally publish articles by George Lansbury which touched on the problem.

The Morris Carter Report figured largely in the Colonial Office Debate of 12 July 1934. Mr. William Lunn was again the leading Labour party speaker.[1] Lunn began by stating that the Colonial Office debate was a placid debate compared to debates on home affairs. There was very rarely a division and there were not very bitter differences of opinion. However, it did not follow that the Labour party accepted everything. He did not expect the Government to accept the 'Socialist' policy in regard to the colonies, but since the Government had accepted that they were trustees of the people who inhabited the colonies and had accepted the paramountcy of 'native' interests in the colonies, it ought to be possible for the Colonial Secretary to accept many of the suggestions which were made from all parts of the House in the interests of the colonies. Lunn was still advocating the trusteeship policy rather than the 'equal rights' policy of N. Leys.

Turning to the Morris Carter Report, Lunn stated that

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1. House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, Vol. 130, cols. 572-583, 12 July 1934.

the Labour party did not regard it as final and did not regard themselves as bound by it. Lunn appreciated the Commission's work and the fact that it had listened to nearly 500 African witnesses. Although 1,500 acres were to be added to the reserves of Kavirondo, Lunn was disappointed to find that very little of the land that had been taken away from the 'natives' previously was to be restored to them, and that the land that was to be added to the reserves was malarial. 'We should have liked to see some of the hundreds of miles of the best land in respect of soil, water and climate restored to the Africans.'[1] The Labour Government's 'native' charter in 1930 laid down that the Africans occupation of the land was for ever, but that has been violated. The gold in Kenya should be the property of the nation. 'We shall reserve our right when we are in power...to alter what may be done as a result of this report.'[2]

Major Milner, a Labour M.P., asked whether the African was to be prevented for ever from 'poking his nose into the highlands' which were the better part of the country.[3] Colonel Wedgwood thought that the real question that mattered was: what were the 'natives' going to do with the land when they got it and how were they going to get it. The Colonial Office should make up its mind whether they were going to continue collective ownership, faith in the headman, a sort of Lord of the Manor idea that the chief has sole rights in the land or were going to introduce the system which had worked so well in Northern Nigeria, where the land was held by the peasant from the State at a rent which varied according to the value of his land. This was individual ownership coupled with State ownership and

1. ibid., col. 578.
2. ibid., col. 581.
3. ibid., col. 605.

Wedgwood held it to be an admirable combination.[1]

Mr. Morgan Jones summed up the debate for the Labour party.[2] He said that it was sometimes argued that the Labour party showed no interest in imperial problems, but he thought that they had succeeded in showing in recent years that whether their views were orthodox or unorthodox, and they were probably regarded as the latter by the National Government, they at any rate had definite views on these problems. The Labour party's view was that the more remote a governed area was from London, the more vigilant they were called upon to be in regard to its affairs.

Labour's speakers in the House of Commons relied, to a great extent on information supplied by the members of the A.C.I.Q. McGregor Ross was particularly active on the question of land in Kenya. He wrote to Morgan Jones that it was becoming increasingly clear that the 'Morris Carter Commission was a one-man Ramp by Lister.'[3] He expressed similar views to Milner, another of Labour's colonial spokesmen in the Commons. McGregor Ross thought that it was 'the greatest hypocrisy for Lister to suggest that there is any possible basis for fair negotiation, or honest agreement between the Kenya government and the scattered groups of African villagers, whose rights Carter had recommended should be rendered inoperative.' The Morris Carter Commission was 'dirty, dirty, work.'[4] To Addison, McGregor Ross wrote: 'can nothing further be done to make him (Cunliffe-Lister) "call off" the Kenya

1. ibid., cols. 633-634.
2. House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, Vol. 130, cols. 641-650, 12 July 1934.
3. McGregor Ross to Morgan Jones, 21 March 1935, McGregor Ross Papers, Rhodes House, Mss.Afr. s.1178(1).
4. McGregor Ross to Milner, 21 March 1935, ibid.

government from harassing African villages.'[1]

Ross' views were put in the House of Commons during the next Colonial Office debate. Lunn declared that the Labour party believed that the Morris Carter Commission had supported the whites' claims to land and denied the rights of the African population. The report had urged exclusive legal right of ownership to Europeans, which meant that the best land in Kenya could never be held as of right by Africans. He promised that a Labour Government would never agree to the ideas of the Morris Carter Commission and would repudiate them as soon as possible. Lunn also criticised the National Government for failing to enforce a 'non-native' income tax in Kenya, as Moyne had recommended. Lunn hoped that policies in Kenya would, in the future, be more in line with the declared policy of both parties, which was that the interests of the Africans should be paramount.[2]

The National Government also received pressure from the Africans themselves to change its policy. Kenyatta wrote to Malcolm MacDonald, the new National Government Colonial Secretary, asking him to prevent the Kenya government removing the Kikuyu from ancestral land against their will.[3] MacDonald, however,did not respond to this plea. McGregor Ross helped and guided the African leaders, Kenyatta and Parmenas Mockerie, in the early 1930s. Ross befriended Kenyatta and found H. Hooper, an ex-Kenyan missionary, to act as friend and guide to Mockerie. Ross was a strong Christian and hoped to steer the African leaders along the Christian path. However, the African leaders drifted apart

1. McGregor Ross to Addison, 21 March 1935, ibid.
2. House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, Vol. 141, cols. 2055-2062, 25 July 1935.
3. Kenyatta to M. MacDonald, 13 November 1935, McGregor Ross Papers, op.cit.

from their Christian mentors and fell in with people to the left of the Labour party. Kenyatta, in particular, was strongly influenced by George Padmore, the West Indian leader, who was a communist. Kenyatta paid a visit to Moscow during the winter 1932-3. He was falling more and more under the guidance of Padmore rather than Ross. Even Harry Thuku, the K.C.A. leader, was worried about Kenyatta. He wrote to C.R. Buxton that he was 'very disturbed by Mr. Kenyatta' because he had gone to Germany and Russia where the K.C.A. had not wanted him to go.[1] Thuku had heard nothing from Kenyatta and he was particularly anxious that Kenyatta should support the K.C.A. case before the Morris Carter Commission. However, Kenyatta had already presented his evidence in London without informing Thuku. Kenyatta's views were becoming more radical than those of the Kikuyu leaders in Kenya. The leaders in Kenya looked to the British Government for their welfare and saw the future in colonial terms but Kenyatta was thinking in terms of African self-government.

The leaders in Kenya were not united. The 'official' Kikuyu leader was Chief Koinange, who, with the President of the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association, and a Kamba headman from Machakos, had represented the Africans in Kenya before the Joint Committee on Closer Union. The K.C.A. was a more radical organisation with the support of the younger, educated Kikuyu. Kenyatta and Mockerie had come to London in 1931 to put the K.C.A. point of view to the Joint Committee but had been refused an audience. They remained in Europe to gain 'education'. Mockerie returned in 1933 but Kenyatta remained, using London as a base for his travels in the 1930s. Harry Thuku became the leader of the K.C.A. in June

1. J. Murray-Brown, 'Kenyatta' (Fontana ed. 1974), p.173.

1932, after his release from prison. The K.C.A. then split between Thuku and Kangethe, the former leader. All the African leaders, however, managed to get together in February 1934 to present a joint list of grievances to the Colonial Office.[1] The main grievances that the Africans put forward were that their educational facilities were inferior to those of the white settlers. The rate of taxation of the Africans was too high, particularly hut tax. The Europeans paid relatively little taxation. There were too many restrictions on coffee growing. The land was unfairly distributed and the Africans had no secure rights to their land. The Africans were also worried about European domination of East Africa. These grievances were very similar to those that the Labour party put forward in its pamphlets on African policy.

Kenyatta took a stronger line than the Labour party and the other African leaders in Kenya. In the January 1933 issue of 'Negro Worker', he wrote a long article, in which he declared that the history of British rule in Kenya was 'one of the blackest spots in the black history of British Imperialism.' The Africans' land had been stolen by the white men and the Africans chosen to speak before the Joint Committee on Closer Union were stooges. Missionaries had been used as 'agents of imperialism' teaching the Africans that they must bear oppression and exploitation in order to have 'better conditions in heaven when they die!' Kenyatta called for the 'evacuation of the imperialist robber from the land.'[2] In a more considered article for Nancy Cunard's anthology entitled 'Negro', Kenyatta stated that 'British imperialism supports the backward form of social relationships in Kenya.' Colonial administration

1. J. Murray-Brown, op.cit., p.179.
2. ibid., p.175-176.

preserved tribal society which would never be able to break loose from colonialism. Only the detribalized African could lead Africa out of colonial domination.[1]

Kenyatta's views were outlined at length in his book 'Facing Mount Kenya' which was based on the papers that he had written in 1936-37 for Malinowski's seminars at the London School of Economics. His main theme was that the Kikuyu way of life, before the intervention of the white man, had integrity and virtue. "In the old order of the African society, with all the evils that are supposed to be connected with it, a man was a man, and as such he had the rights of a man and liberty to exercise his will and thought in a direction which suited his purposes as well as those of his fellow men; but today an African, no matter what his station in life, is like a horse which moves only in the direction that the rider pulls the rein." Kenyatta was annoyed by the white man's assumption of superiority. He was urging the Africans of Kenya to be proud of their past and demand the right to govern themselves in their own country.[2]

Despite Kenyatta's radical views, he did not lose complete touch with the Labour party. When Creech Jones became Labour's main colonial spokesman, after the 1935 election, Kenyatta kept him supplied with information. However, McGregor Ross and Kenyatta finally came to a 'parting of ways' because Ross found Kenyatta unreliable about keeping appointments and paying debts. Ross was disconcerted at Kenyatta's 'cavalier' attitude to life. Nevertheless, Ross had made tremendous efforts to help African leaders when they came to London. It was due to

1. ibid., p.176-177.
2. J. Kenyatta, 'Facing Mount Kenya' (London, 1938) Quoted, J. Murray-Brown, op.cit., p.192.

people such as Ross, Leys, Buxton and Creech Jones that the Labour party did not completely lose the confidence of the emerging African leaders. Fenner Brockway also played an important part in helping African leaders, but, in the 1930s, he belonged to the I.L.P., rather than the Labour party.

During the early 1930s, the Labour party, under the guidance of the A.C.I.Q. made an attempt to protect African rights in East Africa. However, the party was so numerically weak that it could not make any dent in the policies of the National Government. Leys and Ross, the party's main experts on East Africa, felt that the situation was deteriorating there. The Moyne report had proposed moderate reforms in taxation but these had been abandoned in the face of protests from the white settlers. The Morris Carter Report had been a great disappointment to the Labour party and the Africans in Kenya. The white settlers came off much better than the Africans. The discovery of gold at Kakamega in an African reserve led to the amendment of the Kenya Native Lands Trust Ordinance to the detriment of the Africans. The Government yielded to the pressure by the white settlers to release the African land for prospecting. Kenyatta believed that this proved that the Africans could have no faith in 'hypocritical promises which mean nothing but the oppression and exploitation of the masses'.[1] Passfield's Ordinance had soon been reversed. McGregor Ross wrote to Archdeacon Owen that it made him 'sick' to read the numerous quotations of East African gold shares in 'The Times': 'I still cherish hopes that if we escape a world war, a Socialist government, given a proper Colonial

1. Quoted, J. Murray-Brown, op.cit., p.178.

Secretary, might give the whole lot a time-notice and frog-march them off the land-substituting state operations.'[1] Norman Leys seemed to feel that all he had fought for had failed. He wrote that in 1906 he had made up his mind to subordinate everything to working for the Africans and had had great hopes that a Labour Government would act on its intentions in Africa, 'but as the years passed...it had all proved a dream.'[2] Leys and Ross felt that the 1929-31 Labour Government had missed its chance to radically alter the situation in Africa and reduce the power of the settlers. The events of 1931-5 had proved that the settlers were still predominant in East Africa.

1. McGregor Ross to Archdeacon Owen, 19 March 1935, McGregor Ross Papers, op.cit.
2. N. Leys to 'Peg and William', 27 February 1935, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 9.

CHAPTER 9.

INDUSTRIALISATION AND THE APPROACH TO WAR

During the second half of the nineteen thirties, the Labour party devoted more attention than it had previously done to the conditions of labour in the colonies. It had always been concerned to prevent forced labour and ensure that the African was paid a fair wage but towards the second half of the nineteen thirties, industrialisation in East and West Africa became more extensive and the Labour party took an increasing interest in its effects upon the African. The T.U.C. awoke to the problem, largely because it feared the effect of low wage African labour. It feared that it might provide competition to British labour. Ernest Bevin was particularly concerned that if the colonies did develop their industrial resources, they might provide competition for workers in Britain. At the 1930 T.U.C. Conference, he had asked "Ought there not to be some control against the possible development of coal in Tanganyika which might come into competition with your coal here?"[1]

There were varying schools of thought within the Labour party about the industrialisation of Africa. Josiah Wedgwood believed that it would inevitably lead to the exploitation of the African. He thought that the major cause of African misery was the expropriation of the land. As a result of the loss of their land, the Africans were forced to work for the white settlers in order to acquire the money to pay taxes. Wedgwood's ideal was an African tilling his own land. He did not share the Labour party's general enthusiasm for the West African system where the land was the property of the tribe, and was left in the hands of the chiefs. The result was that African landlordism had developed instead of white landlordism. The chiefs were becoming as bad as white landlords and a landless

1. T.U.C. Report 1930, p.286.

proletariat was developing with a few rich African landlords. Wedgwood also opposed indirect rule through the chiefs and pressed instead for direct rule by the colonial service until the Africans had been educated for liberty.[1]

The Labour party's other experts were divided about the questions of economic development and indirect rule. However, most of them seemed to think that the African could no longer be left to look after himself on his own plot of land, as Wedgwood thought. There was a feeling that the African could no longer be kept out of the modern wage economy. Tribal institutions were being broken down and it was felt that Africans could not be kept out of the Western way of life. Buxton thought that the fundamental grievance of the Africans was not malnutrition but that 'we have broken down the old tribal life in the interests of white exploiters and failed to build up prosperity either materially or by education.'[2] Leys believed that the policy of 'African development along African lines' was 'humbug' and that Africans should be allowed to do the same as other human beings.[3] Leys and Barnes were beginning to feel that African tribal institutions were no longer appropriate and were being used as a method of preventing the Africans having equal opportunities with the Europeans. They thought that by encouraging tribal institutions, the Colonial Office was preventing the progress of the Africans into the modern world. Leys and Barnes felt that the policy of indirect rule was no longer appropriate because it prevented African development and encouraged dominance by

1. J.C. Wedgwood, 'My Fighting Life', (London,1941),p.185.
2. C.R. Buxton, 'Memo', November 1936, Buxton Papers Box 6.
3. N. Leys to 'Peg and William', 27 February 1935, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 9.

the chiefs. Leys' hope was that educated Africans would be trained on an equal basis with Europeans and would eventually be able to rule their countries. He was full of praise for Achimota college in the Gold Coast where Africans were being educated in an atmosphere of equality between European and African.[1] However, some members of the A.C.I.Q. such as Green and Benson, thought that a policy of indirect rule was useful as it provided a method of training Africans in local government. The Labour party experts were divided about the benefits and disadvantages of indirect rule. Nevertheless, they had abandoned the idea that the African could be left in peace to till his own land, as Wedgwood and Morel had hoped. As Buxton put it: 'the Western way of life had been imposed upon many Africans and it would be impossible to keep them from the Western social and economic system.'[2]

Ernest Bevin, who had first come into contact with the 'struggling, impoverished world of the underdeveloped countries'[3] when he served on the Colonial Development Advisory Committee set up under the Colonial Development Act of 1929, believed in developing the raw materials of the Empire in order to help British industry. He was in favour of imperial protection - unlike most members of the Labour party and A.C.I.Q. who favoured a policy of free trade and the 'open door'. He had urged upon the second Labour Government that, in addition to the political organisation of the Empire, there should be an economic organisation as well. He stated, "I am no Imperialist but an Empire exists."[4] The T.U.C. became concerned with

1. N. Leys, 'College in the Gold Coast', 'New Statesman', 22 April 1933, p.499.
2. C.R. Buxton, 'Memo on Native Representation and Franchise', 17 July 1931, Buxton Papers, ibid.
3. A. Bullock, 'The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin', Vol. 1, (London, 1960),p.435.
4. T.U.C. Report 1930, pp.257-261.

African industrialisation and labour conditions in order to protect their own labour conditions and wages. In 1937 it set up the Colonial Advisory Committee to consider how best to help Africans to improve their labour conditions and set up trade unions.

Ramsay MacDonald had opposed the scheme for imperial protection which had been put forward in 1930 on the grounds that it would jeopardise Britain's standard of living. He thought that if the Dominions' products were let in free British farmers would suffer.[1] However, by 1931, he had left the Labour party and the official policy was that the Labour party believed in 'complete equality for all nations in the markets of the non-self-governing Empire, and is opposed to any administrative discrimination against foreigners in the disposal of property or grant of concessions. Any Imperial fiscalpolicy which is based on the conception of a colony as a market or field for exploitation which may be reserved, as far as possible, for the benefit of British or Dominion traders and capitalists, regardless of native interests is to be deprecated, both from the standpoint of native interests and of international political considerations.' The party opposed the Ottawa agreements which had been made by MacDonald's Government.[2]

The official colonial policy of the Labour party could be summed up, said the 1933 pamphlet, in the words 'socialisation and self-government'. Industrial development was accepted but 'the transition from capitalist to socialist enterprise must be hastened to the fullest possible extent.' 'Conditions of labour, wages, etc., must be under the control of the Government, and must allow for a good standard of life

1. I. Davies, 'The Labour Commonwealth', New Left Review, No. 22, December 1963, p.77.
2. 'The Colonial Empire' (The Labour Party, 1933)pp.14-15.

and opportunities for leisure and self-development.'[1]

'For Socialism and Peace' had stated that the economic policies of Ottawa were 'ill-guided'[2], and the 1935 General Election manifesto had declared that 'a Labour Government would...seek full international co-operation in economic and industrial questions with a view to increasing trade and raising standards of living throughout the world, and removing the economic cause of war, through equitable arrangements for access to markets, for the international control of sources of supply of raw materials, and for the extension of the mandate system for colonial territories.'[3]

The Abyssinian crisis opened the question of the lack of colonies of Italy and Germany. George Lansbury thought that Britain should share her colonies and markets with the rest of the world.[4] Whether the Germans and Italians were genuinely concerned at their lack of colonies or whether they were just playing the issue for the sake of propaganda is open to doubt.[5] However, in an article in the 'Daily Herald' on the dissatisfied powers' claims, Francis Williams wrote that 'if we are to oppose the dissatisfactions of the "have-not" Powers with a stiff-necked refusal to take into account anything but the narrowest considerations of imperial prestige, there can be no outcome to the present world situation but war, sooner or later.'[6] In another article, he wrote that 'because the lack of colonies has become the focal point of that feeling of economic injustice under which the dissatisfied powers live, a solution of the

1. ibid., pp.4-5.
2. 'For Socialism and Peace' (The Labour Party, 1934),p.12.
3. 1934 Manifesto.
4. The Times, 15 July 1935.
5. 'The Appeasers', Gilbert & Gott (London, 1967),pp.80-101.
6. 'Daily Herald', 12 March 1936.

colonial problem is the most urgent of all.'[1] Leonard Barnes stated in a pamphlet 'The Future of the Colonies'[2] that the lack of colonies had become the focal point of that feeling of economic injustice under which the dissatisfied powers lived. He also believed that 'a solution to the Colonial Problem is the most urgent of all'.

A special sub-committee of the National Executive Committee of the Labour party was formed to examine the question of the German and Italian claims for colonies. It was a Joint Committee comprising members of both the International Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. The N.E.C. resolved that Ernest Bevin, F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, John Wilmot M.P. and Francis Williams be added to the sub-committee.[3] Bevin was too busy to attend but the minutes were sent to him. In the event, E.F.M. Durbin, H. Gaitskell, G. Hutton and Francis Williams and D.T.T. Jay were co-opted.[4] The full Joint Special Committee began work at the end of 1935 with Leonard Woolf as the secretary.[5]

The N.E.C. circulated a private and confidential memo on Labour's foreign policy on 1 March 1936. In the section dealing with the claims for colonial policy of the unsatisfied powers, it stated that if these were to be satisfied they would have to be satisfied in Africa. It seemed to be

1. 'Daily Herald', 27 February 1936.
2. L. Barnes, 'The Future of the Colonies' (London,1936).
3. N.E.C. Minutes, 19 September 1935.
4. N.E.C. Minutes, 25 November 1935.
5. Members of the Committee included C.R. Buxton, M. Carlin, John Dugdale, S.H. Bailey, T. Reid, Lord Faringdon, Morgan Jones M.P., A. Henderson M.P., J.F.N. Green, S. Lawrence, A. Creech Jones, M.P., H.W. Wallace, R. Smith, W.McGregor Ross, W.E.A. Forster, G. Lathan M.P., D. Jay, H. Gaitskell, H. Dalton, E. Wilkinson and W.Gillies.

thought that European nations needed colonies to satisfy prestige but the memo stated that it was to be 'doubted whether claims based upon such psychological reasons can be satisfied imperialistically in a world in which there are so many nations but only a limited supply of backward peoples'.[1] The memo continued that the more possession of colonial territories was no guarantee that the colonies' raw materials would be available to the possessing power in time of war. If the League of Nations were really effective, states could look for security in collective resistance to aggression and the importance of colonial possessions would diminish and eventually disappear. The original raison d'etre for imperialism, stated the memo, was that it was associated with the possession of surplus capital for export and closely associated with this factor was the consideration that colonies were of economic and social advantage to the 'upper' classes in imperialist countries because they provided lucrative and attractive administrative and military jobs for civil servants, planters and military and naval officers. (Here the memo closely followed J.A. Hobson's book 'Imperialism')[2] The section on the colonies concluded by stating that a committee of the party was studying 'the whole problem and its solution in so far as it arises out of genuine grievances capable of satisfaction.'[3]

The final meeting of the Joint Special Committee on the Demand for Colonial Territories and Equality of Economic Opportunity took place on 1 July 1936, when the draft memo was finally passed after the section on population had been re-considered, and it was sent to the N.E.C. for approval.[4]

1. N.E.C. Minutes, 1 March 1936, Memo on 'The Labour Party's Foreign Policy', p.21.
2. J.A. Hobson, 'Imperialism' (London,1938, second edition).
3. N.E.C. Minutes, 1 March 1936, op.cit., p.23.
4. J.S.C. on D. for C.T. and E.E.C., Minutes, 1 July 1936.

It was discussed by the N.E.C. on 22 July 1936 when it was resolved 'that the memo should be published at once' and the committee should prepare a shorter statement of policy based upon the report.[1]

'The Demand for Colonial Territories and Equality of Economic Opportunity' was published in August 1936.[2] The foreword stated that it had been prepared by a sub-committee at the request of the N.E.C., but the N.E.C. did not consider itself bound by all the pamphlet's recommendations. F. Williams had drawn up a draft on the export of capital, in which he stated that the whole idea of exploitation should be abandoned. It was no good merely handing over the right to exploit. He thought the mandate system should be applied to all colonies and that the best solution to the question of financial development was to set up a League Loans Authority which would provide investors with an equal opportunity of taking advantage of the outlet of capital provided in colonial territories.[3] N. Bentwick drew up the draft on population stating that there should be no discrimination in the British Dominions and Colonies in favour of the nationals of the metropolitan country as against the nationals of other countries for the purposes of immigration. The policy of the Open Door should apply to men as well as to goods.[4] B. Riley[5] wrote a draft memo on access to raw materials. He thought that there should be free access to raw materials for the 'dissatisfied

1. N.E.C. Minutes, 22 July 1936.
2. 'The Demand for Colonial Territories and Equality of Economic Opportunity' (The Labour Party, August 1936).
3. F. Williams, Memo on Export of Capital, A.C.International Q. and A.C. Imperial Q. 1936.
4. N. Bentwick, The Problem of Population, ibid.
5. B. Riley, Access to Raw Materials, ibid.

powers'. This would be better than any exchange of territory. L. Barnes drew up a list[1] of policies and remedies. The main point was that the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations should ensure that there was equal access to the colonies for the 'dissatisfied powers'. The finished pamphlet, combining the drafts, represented the collective opinion of the members of the International Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. The pamphlet began by stating that it was limited in its enquiries to the claims of the dissatisfield powers, Germany, Italy and Japan, whose claims, if they were to be satisfied, would have to be met in Africa and the Pacific. The alleged reasons for demanding a colonial empire belonged to three general categories: prestige, strategic considerations and economic considerations. Concerning prestige, the pamphlet stated that there was only a limited supply of backward peoples and the removal of such peoples from the colonial status would still further limit the supply but would reduce the inequality between imperial and non-imperial powers. As instruments of strategy colonies were useful for communication. Economically, they provided security of supplies of essential raw materials, markets for the produce of the home country's industry, a closed field for the export of capital and the exploitation of concessions, lucrative and attractive jobs and an outlet for the surplus population of the over-populated countries.

The pamphlet examined each of these points in turn. Concerning access to raw materials, the conclusion was that whatever the merits of the dissatisfied powers' claims to sources of raw materials they could not in fact be

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1. L. Barnes Statement of Policy and Remedies, ibid.

satisfied by an exchange of colonial territories because most countries' main sources of raw materials were not their own colonies. On the question of providing markets the conclusion was that, although in the case of Britain her colonial market was more accessible to British than to foreign exporters, the quantitative importance of the market was not great. The population argument was also not a strong one because Germany and Italy had less population pressure than Britain which had the greatest colonial empire in the world, the possession of which had clearly not saved Britain from an unemployment problem. Concerning the argument that the possession of colonies was advantageous from the point of view of providing a market for capital, the conclusion of the committee was that this was not all that important since Great Britain had large investments in South America over which she had no political control. However, the colonies did provide a substantial attraction in that they provided a closed market for capital which was at a disadvantage in the open market where there was highly organised competition. Colonies also provided opportunities for profitably speculative investment through the obtaining of private concessions which practically always went to nationals of the colonial power. In order to alleviate this problem the pamphlet advocated a Colonial Development Board which would be closely associated with a strengthened Mandates Commission. The Board would scrutinise projects of colonial development and consider proposals made for financing official projects of development - ensuring that there was equality of opportunity for tendering or underwriting any issue and scrutinising private projects. It would ensure that there was equality of opportunity for firms of any state which was a member of the League of

Nations to tender for contract. Concerning the point about providing jobs for the upper classes, the pamphlet decided that it was not all that strong since in India and all Britain's colonies the total employed - civil and military - was only 19,190.

Summarising the economic part of the survey, the pamphlet stated that colonies were of some, but not great, economic importance; the non-possession of them was only really injurious in so far as discriminatory practices were adopted by the 'possessors'. The abolition of discrimination rather than the exchange of territories should be the aim of policy, thought the Advisory Committee. However, the abolition of preferential and discriminatory practices would not remedy the dissatisfied powers' principal economic troubles; the real remedy of those troubles was in their own hands. Nevertheless, the removal of discrimination should be undertaken since a return to multilateral trade was desirable not only on general grounds but also because of the great dependence of certain of the dissatisfied powers upon a multilateral system. 'We regard the removal of trade barriers on the above lines as the most important contribution which the British Empire could make today to the cause of peace.'[1]

There should be guarantees of uninterrupted supplies of raw materials which should be given in the form of an international convention. Concerning the administration of Colonial Territories, there were five possibilities: transfer of sovereignty, transfer of territory, transfer of mandates, administration of the existing colonies by an international authority acting for the League, and an extension of the mandate system. The Joint Advisory

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1. D.C.T. and E.E.O., p.45.

committee thought that the first three ideas should be rejected; the fourth had attractions but entailed practical difficulties while the fifth seemed the most hopeful. There were two ways of putting the fifth proposal into effect. Either the colonial powers could accept the supervision of the League, acting through the Permanent Mandates Commission in respect of territories held as colonies or protectorates, or the supervisory powers of the League could be made wider and more strict.

The pamphlet advocated that Britain should offer to bring her African colonies under the mandate system, and provided that such a League system of collective security was accepted and established, Britain should take steps to see that other Imperial powers were invited to deal with their colonies on similar lines. Even if this invitation were not immediately accepted, Britain should declare that it accepted the mandatory system in principle for all the colonies inhabited mainly by peoples of primitive culture and would accept the scrutiny of the Mandates Commission in such cases if it could be arranged. However, the offer should be conditional on an extensive reform of the Mandates Commission to give it machinery to exercise more direct control over policy.

There was considerable discussion of policy concerning the dissatisfied powers in the press. Stafford Cripps wrote in 'Tribune'[1] that he was not one of those who believed that injustice could be righted by some swapping of colonies amongst the imperialist nations; as far as he was concerned, he would never support a policy which aimed at putting another living soul under the domination of the

1. 'Tribune', 28 October 1938, pp.1-2.

Nazi regime. He thought that until the 'native' peoples were ready for self-government, the interests of the 'native' people and the peoples of the world in the products of the territories could be guarded by a truly international administration of the group of countries that were prepared to take part in the scheme. The international administration of the raw material growing areas of the colonies would be built up as an international civil service and would be subject to a planning committee representing the nations who were taking part in the scheme.

Cripps also put forward his views in Parliament on 5 October 1938, when he stated that what was needed for a sound foreign policy was the strength to maintain the rule of law internationally and second, the courage to initiate a complete reorganisation of the economic life of the nation even at the price of sacrificing some imperial interests. 'I do not and never would suggest the handing over of any Imperial possessions of this country to another Imperialist nation.'[1] Rival imperialisms would never be satisfied by the handing over of the smaller nations of the world; the time would come when the clash would be at Britain's door-step. The Labour party dissented from the Government's policy of giving away the property of others and building up huge armaments. This would never resolve the problem of peace. Cripps was speaking for the Labour party in Parliament, but the policy of international control which he had proposed in his article was more radical than that advanced by the party in its pamphlet on 'Economic Opportunity....' The party had put forward the idea of internationalisation of the colonies in 1917 in its 'Memo

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1. 413 H.C.Deb., 5s., cols. 413, 5 October 1938.

on War Issues' but had later decided that this scheme was too idealistic, favouring instead an extension of the mandate system.

The Labour party's policy towards 'the dissatisfied powers' put the emphasis on equal opportunity for all powers to trade with the colonies. It appeared that the welfare of the Africans was not the paramount consideration. The Labour party A.C.I.Q. did not consider asking the Africans what their views on the question were. The main consideration seemed to be the desire to appease the German and Italian governments. This was the main concern of the leaders of the party, such as Dalton and Bevin. The major question that was asked was: 'how can the colonies be used to appease Germany and Italy?' The problem of how the African colonies could be helped to independence, on the basis of a strong economy, was not considered, in any detail. The Labour party remained committed to the Africans' welfare in its public statements but it is significant that the party did devote attention to the question of sharing out colonial markets. The Labour party's attitude seemed to prove the I.L.P.'s point that the Labour party regarded the Africans as incapable of having much say in their own development.

In a motion, put forward in the Commons on behalf of the Labour party, by Noel-Baker, it was stated that no redistribution of the colonies or mandated territories should take place 'without the consent of the inhabitants' but it was not stated how the views of the inhabitants were going to be obtained. The motion was: 'in the opinion of this House no redistribution of Colonial or mandated territories should be made without the consent

of the inhabitants; and that, as part of a general peace settlement, international agreements should be drawn up extending the application of the mandate to all Colonial territories which are not ripe for self-government, providing equal economic opportunity in such territories for the nationals of all signatory powers, and establishing as a primary purpose of Colonial policy the welfare and progress of the Native inhabitants.'[1] After debate the motion was defeated, but Philip Noel-Baker's speech was published as a pamphlet by the Labour party.[2] In this he stated that the colonies were no longer an important source of raw materials. The Western nations had to prove that they were in earnest about applying trusteeship to the colonies. This they could do by applying the mandate system which was based upon three principles: that the progress and welfare of the 'native' population must be the primary purpose of colonial government, that there should be economic equality for all nations and that there should be full publicity with regard to administration. The Labour party believed that by applying these principles to the British Empire 'we shall preserve for ever, for ourselves and for mankind everything in the British Empire of which we can be proud.'[3]

The Labour party was definitely against any exchange of colonies, although the Government seemed to be considering the idea. James Browning wrote a letter to 'Tribune' in which he declared that 'it would be an open betrayal of the 'trusteeship' which Britain has accepted if we were to hand over thousands of natives to Fascist slave rule as if

1. 342 H.C.Deb., 5s., cols. 1199-1211, 7 December 1938.
2. P. Noel-Baker, 'Common Sense About the Colonies' (The Labour Party, 1939).
3. ibid., p.14.

they were so much cattle. World peace cannot be secured by placing Germany's former colonies under Hitler's rule, but only by the complete abolition of colonial imperialism'.[1]

G.D.H. Cole put forward similar views in his book 'The People's Front', in which he stated that 'colonial empire is a plain denial of democracy: it is a predatory institution which no real democracy can defend. It is, moreover, an insuperable barrier to the secure establishment of peace. Away with it!'[2] 'Empire' declared that the essential fact of the Empire was that the common people had no say in how they were governed.[3] It was a common trick of progressive thought on the colonial question to demand equal opportunity for all nations in trade and investment in the colonies and some extension of international control of the colonies, usually through a strengthened mandates system, but the weakness of these proposals (which the Labour party made) was that even if they were adequate to placate the dissatisfied imperialist powers, they did not solve the problem of the colonial peoples. The weakness of the Labour party's policy, which called for opposition to imperialist aggressors, was that Britain herself had as anti-social an imperialism as any of her rivals.[4]

H.N. Brailsford thought that although the Labour party

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1. 'Tribune', 29 October 1937.
2. G.D.H. Cole, 'The People's Front' (London,1937),p.168.
3. 'Empire', Vol. 1. No. 5, October 1938, pp.51-2. 'Empire' was an anti-imperialist journal founded in June 1938 by Frank Horrabin, Leonard Barnes and Julius Lewin. It had no official standing within the Labour party. It ran into financial difficulties and was taken over by the Fabian Society in 1940. Its 'policy line' was generally to the left of 'official' Labour policy during the period 1938-40. Leys resigned from the editorial board in 1939 because he thought 'Empire' was becoming too 'Marxist' in its analysis.
4. 'Empire', Vol. 2, No. 10, October 1939, p.159.

stood for full autonomy and even self-government, it did not seem to have realised that the fact of empire meant a primarily financial relationship between the white creditor and black debtor which allowed the former to thrive on roast beef, while the latter starved on rice. The end of imperialism meant one thing- the smashing of the relationship of debt and the equalising of the two standards of life.[1]

Leonard Barnes, a member of the A.C.I.Q., and, of the editorial board of 'Empire', wrote a number of influential books and pamphlets in the middle and late thirties on the colonies and the question of their international supervision. In 'The Duty of Empire'[2], he thought that an extension of the mandate system would probably not be viable: 'A direct extension of the present mandate system would be useless in view of the existing condition and constitution of the League of Nations. But, if and when, an International Socialist Federation can be created, colonies might well be administered under Mandates from the Federation, and the non-native colonial services, so long as they were necessary, might be recruited from all member states.'[3]

Barnes thought that Lenin's statement that a 'socialist' colonial policy was an utter confusion was correct in theory in the sense that one group of workers should not exploit another set in order to remain on a higher standard of living. However, the British Empire did exist and was, to some extent, a going concern and therefore could not help forming a legacy and a problem to any British Government, 'socialist' or otherwise.

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1. H.N. Brailsford, 'Why Capitalism Means War' (London, 1938).
2. L. Barnes, 'The Duty of Empire' (London,1935)
3. L. Barnes, op.cit., p.293.

A 'socialist' revolution in Britain was the pre-condition of any tolerable imperial system but this did not only mean the rise of the Labour party to power but a decisive change in the economic structure of British society which would have to be consolidated by corresponding and concurrent changes in the internal economies of the colonies. Genuine progress in the colonies was impossible until they had been taken out of the hands of profit-seeking interests and brought under effective social control. Barnes thought that this could be accomplished by socialisation of the whole capital supply and development purely in the interests of the 'natives'. The marketing of 'native' produce should be organised by a disinterested public agency. There should also be the quickest possible growth of self-government which should be accompanied by the growth of an internationalist rather than nationalist spirit. A start could be made by staffing the medical, health, technical and administrative services with 'native' personnel and pushing forward with education. Concerning trade, Barnes thought that the policy of the 'open door' with full commercial equality should be pursued.

Barnes emphasised the need for a decisive change in the economic structure of Britain and the creation of an International Socialist Federation to replace the League of Nations. Norman Leys welcomed Barnes' book in the 'New Statesman' as the 'best book in existence on modern imperialism and the best written.'[1] Leys wrote to W.Holtby that he and Barnes agreed about almost everything.[2] However, even Barnes did not think that political independence could come in the African colonies for 20 to

1. 'New Statesman', 25 May 1935, p.756.
2. N. Leys to W. Holtby, 25 June 1934, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.

30 years.[1] In 'The Future of the Colonies',[2] he wrote that colonies should not be regarded as 'swag'; the problem was not one of fair distribution among the robbers, but of looking after the interests of the 'native' peoples. He advocated an Empire low tariff group which was open to all countries to join, an international convention to deal with raw material supplies and an undertaking to turn colonies into mandated territories and bring movements of capital under League control. Mandates should be held in trust from the League. 'Britain would properly takesteps to see that other imperial powers were invited to deal with their colonies on similar lines. But Britain's own action should emphatically not be conditional on the acceptance of the invitation by the other powers.'[3] Barnes went further than official Labour party policy which had suggested that action should be dependent on the acceptance by other powers of the same obligations. Francis Williams, in a review in the 'Daily Herald', hoped that 'The Future of the Colonies' would have the widest possible circulation.[4]

In the 'Political Quarterly', Leonard Barnes stated that the fundamental problem in tropical Africa was to develop the internal market so that Africans would be given a much larger share in the wealth of their country. The trading and marketing monopolies that disposed of Africa's wealth should be transferred to democratic African control based upon the principles of co-operation.[5] In 'The Skeleton of Empire',[6] Barnes wrote that 'the poverty of

1. L. Barnes, 'Empire or Democracy' (London, 1939)
2. L. Barnes, 'The Future of the Colonies' (London,1936)
3. ibid., p.44.
4. 'Daily Herald', 27 February 1936.
5. 'Political Quarterly', Vol. IX, No. 4, Oct-Dec. 1938, pp.503-515.
6. L. Barnes, 'The Skeleton of Empire', (London,1938).

colonial populations is due first and foremost to the fact that the most profitable of the natural resources of their countries have been taken out of their ownership and control and made over to that of European immigrants. In the system of production which arises in consequence of this alienation, a minimum of the wealth produced remains in the colony or in the hands of the natives whose labour is employed to produce it.' A reviewer in the 'Political Quarterly' thought that the 'socialism' which Barnes turned upon the Empire revealed a disquieting skeleton.[1]

However, George Padmore, the communist who had joined the I.L.P., wrote a review of 'Empire and Democracy' in 'Empire' which was strongly critical of Barnes and the Labour party.[2] He thought that the official Labour Movement had neglected to educate its rank and file to recognise their responsibilities towards the colonial workers and peasants. A small number of plutocrats, headed by monopoly capitalists and in control of the state machinery and the instruments of propaganda - the press, church, school and, above all, the crown - was deluding the common people into the belief that the maintenance of the Empire was to the benefit of the nation as a whole. Padmore thought that the only way of liberating the Africans in the colonies was to break up the capitalist machine at home and in the colonies. He was disappointed that Barnes did not advocate independence sooner. 'Africans, says Mr. Barnes, are too illiterate for self-determination now, but they will not be considered too illiterate to die in defence of democratic imperialism in the coming world war. The principle of

1. 'Political Quarterly', Vol. IX, No1, Jan-March 1938,p.137.
2. 'Empire', Vol. 2, No. 3, March 1939, pp.79-80.

self-determination admits no equivocation. People either have a right to be free or a right not to be free - today and not tomorrow. And Mr. Barnes reflects the impudence of most Britishers - even those who call themselves socialists - in assuming the pontifical right of determining who will be free today and who tomorrow.'[1]

Padmore put forward his own views on colonial policy in his book, 'Africa and the World Peace'.[2] He believed that the mandate system could provide no solution because it was under the control of imperialist nations and had been used as a means of bringing the German colonies into the hands of other imperialist nations. This had been thinly disguised as trusteeship. The solution to the problem was to destroy imperialism and this could not be done by taking part in an imperialist war. If there was a war, the Africans should not take sides but use it as an opportunity to overthrow imperialism which was just as much their enemy as fascism. Sir Stafford Cripps appeared to support this view for a time. He wrote a foreword to Padmore's book stating that 'the problem of imperialism has never been fully understood within the Labour Movement of Great Britain; we have been far too complacent about the sufferings of the colonial peoples and have not had the vision to realise the very pressing dangers that we are facing are due even more to British Imperialism than to our domestic Capitalism.'[3]

This was written when Cripps was working for a 'United Front' between the Labour party, the Communist party and the I.L.P. against British Imperialism. He believed, at the time, that the ruling class of Britain was the enemy of the

1. G. Padmore, op.cit., p.80.
2. G. Padmore, 'Africa and World Peace' (London,1937).
3. ibid., p.XI.

workers of Britain and, on all international questions, he took his stand on the principle of fighting the class enemy in one's own country. As the international situation became more desperate, he changed his mind and saw Hitler as the main enemy and thought that there should be an alliance between socialists and 'capitalists' to resist fascism more effectively.[1]

At a conference on 'Peace and the Empire' in 1938, Cripps thought that one of the reasons why Britain should emancipate her colonies was that they would use their freedom to support the democracies against their enemies. It might take time to complete full independence for the colonies but during that time Britain should, by herself, or in company with a like-minded group of countries, devise methods whereby a true trusteeship could be carried out.[2] This was similar to the view of Harold Laski who wrote in the 'Political Quarterly' that the only way to justify colonial possessions was to make the principle of trusteeship so plain a living reality that the record was not open to question. 'No one', he said, can read that record today and claim that this is the case.'[3]

The I.L.P. position on the colonies in the 1930s was well to the left of that of the Labour party. The 'New Leader' stated that the Labour party advocated the progressive development of the colonial countries to self-government through constitutional methods, but all experience had shown that the problem could not be solved in that way. 'The

1. E. Estorick, 'Stafford Cripps' (London, 1949), p.162; D. Marquand, 'Sir Stafford Cripps', in Sissons and French, ed., 'The Age of Austerity' (London,1963),pp.178-181.
2. 'Empire', Vol. 2, No. 8, August 1939, p.128.
3. 'Political Quarterly', Vol. IX, No. 4, Oct-Dec. 1938,p.551.

subject races demand independence. The semi-starved peasants and workers demand social justice.' Only the I.L.P. stood as strongly as ever for the right of the peoples of the Empire to national independence.[1] It thought that the collective security of the governments of Europe was an instrument to maintain imperialism. European workers should help the colonial workers to gain independence as part of their own struggle against fascism and capitalism. Only when Imperialism was overthrown could collective security function for peace and a world order of freedom and co-operation be established.[2]

The 'New Leader' published an article by George Padmore, in which he stated that to 'conceive of getting rid of capitalists without smashing up the Empire is like trying to make an omelette without smashing the egg. It therefore follows that the colonial peoples are the potential allies of the workers against a common enemy - The British Imperialist class.' The Labour party, according to Padmore, was a reformist organisation which would necessarily follow opportunist policies. The bourgeoisie knew that in every crisis of British Imperialism the Labour leadership would line up behind them. On the question of self-determination, the record of the Labour government was well-known. 'People who can bomb Indians struggling for independence, and apply the most repressive measures to safeguard the interests of the British capitalists in the African and West Indian colonies, are the last people in the world to support self-determination. The colonial peoples had no illusions about this.' The Communist party had also failed by pursuing a

1. 'New Leader', 25 February 1938, Empire Special Supplement, p. viii.
2. 'New Leader', 22 July 1938, p.5.

policy identical to Labour, believing that fascism was the major menace and trying to persuade the colonial peoples to help the democratic governments of Europe against the fascists. The I.L.P., thought Padmore, was the only party to maintain the correct theoretical approach on the questions of Imperialist war and the colonies. 'Under no condition must the British workers support "their" bourgeoisie in Imperialist war or help the capitalists to drown in blood the struggles of the colonial peoples.'[1]

Clement Attlee, the leader of the Labour party, felt that the colonial question was a complex and difficult one which could not be solved by simple slogans.[2] The Labour party was in the peculiar position of being a protagonist at home of the stuggle of the workers against the capitalists, but 'in relation to the less developed peoples of the world, (it was) part of a dominant race which collectively exploits them.'[3] As the crude Imperialism of the early days had been modified, largely through the force of public opinion created by the efforts of radicals, socialists and humanitarians, it had been realised that the relationship between advanced and backward peoples raised problems which were not easy to solve. The past could not be wiped out and simple surrender of ill-gotten gains was undesirable and unpractical. Therefore, the Labour party had given much time to the consideration of colonial problems and the application of 'socialist' principles in this sphere. It was not possible simply to relinquish control, for the impact of European civilisation had been felt by all 'native'

1. 'New Leader, 25 February 1938, p.21.
2. C.R. Attlee, 'The Labour Party in Perspective', (London 1937).
3. C.R. Attlee, op.cit., p.228.

communities, generally with a disintegrating effect upon the structure of 'native' society. The Labour party's policy, said Attlee, could be summed up, as had been stated in 'The Colonial Empire', in the two words - 'socialisation and self-government.'[1]

This policy could not be implemented without thought because there was a grave objection to trying to transplant institutions which were indigenous to Britain into a soil in which they could not flourish. The Labour party would insist upon the widest franchise and not give in to demands for self-government by the whites. The Party believed that the British government should act as a trustee for the 'natives' until, through educatinn, they had been prepared for self-government. All land in the colonies should be held in trust for the 'native' inhabitants. The Labour party rejected the conception of the Colonial Empire as an exclusive field of exploitation for the British capitalist, believing in the application of the mandatory principle to all colonies, with regular examination by the League of Nations. Re-allocation of colonial territories between the various great powers was no solution to the colonial problem. The Labour Party's policy remained the same throughout the interwar years - to govern the colonies in 'trust' for the Africans. Trusteeship was still emphasised instead of a policy of equal rights. The problem with trusteeship was, as Cripps had pointed out that it was not being exercised properly. As the I.L.P. stated, the Labour party did not prove antagonistic to the established order in Britain or the empire. Its two, admittedly brief periods of office had left Britain and the empire basically

1. 'The Colonial Empire' (The Labour Party, October 1933), p.4.

unchanged and there had been no real indication that the reason for the lack of change was their dependence on the Liberals. It seemed in domestic, as in imperial affairs, that the party leaders had neither radical ideas for reform nor the will to change Britain and the empire. In 1937 Attlee could still put forward the same basic colonial policy as had been put forward in 1920, glossing over the fact that Labour's two Colonial Secretaries had made no determined effort to ensure that the policy of trusteeship was carried out. They had seemed content to maintain the empire rather than reform it. One of the reasons for this lack of achievement was that, despite the efforts of the A.C.I.Q., there had been no real pressure from any powerful section of the party to implement its pledges on colonial policy. The T.U.C. had been a sleeping giant as far as colonial affairs were concerned.

The T.U.C. awoke to the colonial problem mainly because of the riots and disturbances that broke out in the various colonies in the nineteen thirties. In May 1935 there was a strike in the Northern Rhodesian copper mines because the poll-tax of the miners had been raised from 12s.6d. to 15 shillings. Norman Leys reported in the 'New Statesman' that the strikers had been bullied by the police. This had led to a riot and six of the strikers were killed and twentyfive wounded. Leys wrote that wages were not fixed in East Africa as a result of bargaining, except in the case of a semi-skilled minority. The Africans did not want to work but they had to do so in order to pay taxes. Enough wages were paid to enable the 'native' to pay direct taxation. Leys thought that the 'black subjects of the crown in East Africa deserve a new deal from us. If half

the men and women whose bosoms swelled with pride in the Empire at the King's jubilee knew how the Empire was governed they would get a new deal.'[1]

There was also trouble on the West Coast of Africa. In 1937 there was a cocoa hold-up in the Gold Coast. The European syndicates for buying the cocoa were paying as little as possible for the Africans' raw materials and charging as much as possible for imported goods. The Africans, having exhausted all peaceful methods of redress, were goaded into direct action.[2] The Government appointed a Commission to investigate the causes of the strike. The Commission's report was sympathetic to the grievances of the Africans and recommended that co-operatives should be encouraged to take over the marketing of cocoa in Nigeria and in the Gold Coast. Where co-operatives had had a discouraging past, it recommended the establishment of a Government Board with the sole right to deal with the farmer.[3]

In 1937 there were serious riots in the West Indies when the Trinidad oil workers struck for more pay and better conditions. A warrant was issued for the arrest of the strikers' leader. The strike spread to the sugar plantations and riots broke out. Eleven rioters were killed, marines were landed, a warship was rushed to the island and the Governor asked for a cruiser and a company of infantry.[4] George Padmore wrote in 'Tribune' that 'the official labour and trade union movements in this country should give the maximum amount of support to these

1. 'New Statesman', 4 January 1936, p.9.
2. 'Tribune', 23 December 1937, p.3; 'Empire', Vol. 1 No.7, December 1938, pp.84-5.
3. 'Empire', Vol. 1, No. 7, December 1938, pp.84-86.
4. 'New Leader', 26 November 1937, p.3.

coloured colonial workers in their heroic struggle against squalor and degradation, for a better life; for the right of collective bargaining.'[1]

Following these riots there were disturbances in Barbados. A member of the Trinidad Labour Union visited the town and advocated trade unionism. The authorities deported him. A large crowd came to see him off and clashed with the police. There were riots; shop windows street lights and motor car windows were broken; and 500 were arrested.[2] Norman Leys wrote in the 'New Statesman' that the riots were a result of the fact that the working class had no means of expressing itself except by murder and destruction. Capitalists were using the workers as a source of cheap labour.[3]

In May 1938 there were disturbances in Jamaica when dockers in Kingston came out on strike for higher wages. This soon led to a General Strike and a Commission was appointed to investigate the disturbances.[4] In 1939 there was trouble in Sierra Leone. The Government decided to pass four ordinances to deal with sedition and troublemakers. They were to regulate the deportation of undesirable British subjects, to provide for the punishment of seditious acts and libels, to prohibit the importation and publication of undesirable literature, and to stop incitement to disaffection. There was no writ of habeas corpus. The 'natives' felt strongly about the ordinances and mass meetings were organised in the capital, Freetown, to protest

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1. 'Tribune', 9 July 1937, pp.9-10.
2. 'New Leader', 26 November 1937, p.3.
3. 'New Statesman', 12 February 1938, p.243.
4. 'Empire', Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1938, pp.18-19.

against them. There was mutiny among the 'native' soldiers and eleven were court-martialled, receiving sentences of 7-10 years penal servitude. At the opening of the Legislative Council there was widespread unrest in Freetown and troops were brought in.[1]

'Tribune' thought that the Empire was being used by financiers to make profits. The commercial might of Unilevers was founded upon West Africa and in East Africa white men had decided that Africa should belong to any but the Africans. It was the rich men of England who ruled the British Empire. In the money markets of London, they dealt in the lives and sweat of the workers of Africa and India and the West Indies. They prescribed the law which imposed degenerate poverty in the West Indies, serfdom throughout the African colonies, something well-nigh approaching Fascist dictatorship in India and a colour bar throughout the length and breadth of their domains. When emergency demanded it, they invoked British arms, British bombers, British machine-guns and British blue-jackets to enforce their will.[2] In another article, 'Tribune' stated that the task of changing the empire of capitalist exploitation into a true commonwealth of free happy peoples could only be fulfilled by 'socialism'. It did not rest alone on the shoulders of the peoples repressed by British Imperialism but in the highest degree upon the British working class.[3]

The British workers in their trade unions had not shown much interest in the colonies in the 1920s and early 1930s. Arthur Creech Jones thought that the T.U.C.'s

1. 'New Leader', 9 June 1939; 'Empire', Vol. 2, No. 6, June 1939.
2. 'Tribune', 5 August 1938, p.1.
3. 'Tribune', 28 May 1937, pp.8-9.

preoccupation with Europe had undoubtedly been a drain on its resources and had overshadowed its interest in 'native' labour problems.[1] However, the T.U.C. had helped to draft a convention on the recruitment of 'native' labour at the International Labor Conference in Geneva in 1934.[2] At the Conference the T.U.C. delegate had proposed that the draft convention should have a definition which aimed at the regulation of recruiting with 'a view to the total abolition of recruiting in all forms, in favour of a spontaneous offer of labour.' However, this proposal was rejected and the recommendation adopted by the I.L.O. drafting committee stated the desirability of the progressive elimination of recruiting by the improvement of labour conditions, the development of means of communication and the creation of institutions for facilitating and, if necessary, controlling voluntary movements of labour. It also recommended that schooling facilities should be provided where workers were accompanied by their families and required that the expenses of the journey of the recruited worker from and back to his home and protection on the journey should be borne by the recruiter or employer. The South African mining employers' representative protested strongly about the last proposal.[3] The T.U.C. put these proposals to the Government on 24 January 1935 at a meeting between the General Council and the Minister of Labour. The Colonial Office later announced that it was in sympathy with the I.L.O. Convention. Creech Jones welcomed this announcement in the House of Commons in July 1936.[4]

1. 'Empire', Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1938, p.15.
2. T.U.C. Report 1935, pp.169-172.
3. ibid., pp.171-2.
4. 314 H.C.Deb., 5s., col. 1504, 9 July 1936.

Ernest Bevin drew the attention of the T.U.C. to labour conditions in the colonies in his Presedential Address to the T.U.C. Congress in 1937.[1] He stated that 'news is coming through that all is not well regarding labour matters in our colonies. There are 66,000,000 people, mainly coloured, ruled from the Colonial Office in Whitehall. Most of them are voteless. A great responsibility rests upon us. The disturbances which have taken place in the British West Indies are not without cause. A public survey of labour standards and conditions is absolutely imperative. I am certain that the citizens of this country do not want to be party to the exploitation of dependent coloured peoples. This Congress could do a great work by initiating an investigation into Colonial Labour conditions and publishing the results so that the public could be informed.'[2]

Bevin's advice was followed up and the General Council appointed a Colonial Advisory Committee to deal with the question of colonial labour. At the 1938 T.U.C. Conference at Blackpool, the President, H.H. Elvin, announced that the General Council had been preparing for the future and had set up a Colonial Advisory Committee which placed at the T.U.C.'s disposal 'an armoury of data secured from a life experience in gaining that "earth" knowledge which will help us to understand better and deal with reality the problems to be faced in all parts of the Empire.'[3] The General Council had considered that the colonial labour problem was urgent after the disturbances in the West Indies and felt that the T.U.C., which for several years had had relations with some Labour Movements in the Dominions, ought to devote

1. 'The Record', March 1938, p.200.
2. 1937 T.U.C. Report, pp.74-75.
3. 1938 T.U.C. Report, p.73.

more sustained attention to the whole problem of colonial labour. It accordingly decided to form a Colonial Advisory Committee. Experts on Africa and the colonies were asked to help the T.U.C. Invitations were sent out to specialists, most of whom were serving or had served on the Labour party's Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. The T.U.C.'s Colonial Advisory Committee consisted of C.R. Buxton, J.F.N. Green, A. Creech Jones,M.P., Roy Macgregor, Professor W.M. Macmillan, H.S.L. Polak, Arthur Pugh, T. Reid, W. McGregor Ross and Dr. Drummond Shiels. The T.U.C. representatives were H.H. Elvin (Chairman, T.U.C.) E. Edwards, George Hicks, M.P., Arthur Shaw (T.U.C. General Council) and Sir Walter Citrine (General Secretary).[1]

Arthur Creech Jones wrote in 'Empire' in July 1938 that the unrest in many places was indicative of the absence of a progressive economic policy. The neglect of the Colonial Office and of the Colonial Governments, and the indifference of the planters and big capitalist interests were seen in the appalling social and industrial conditions everywhere in the colonies. The T.U.C.'s special advisory committee would review the whole range of problems, including the protection of 'native' peoples and the administration of industrial legislation. It would also advise the colonial workers on how to build up independent trade unions.[2] The official terms of reference were to make "an investigation into the conditions of the principal races of the Colonial Empire, the object being to see how far the T.U.C. can contribute towards raising their standard of life and generally improving their

1. 1938 T.U.C. Report, p.205.
2. 'Empire', Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1938, p.15.

conditions".[1]

In an article in 'Tribune', Creech Jones stated that the conception of 'trusteeship' was being subordinated to an ugly economic realism which was enforced by those who enjoyed the opportunities of exploiting the colonial peoples. Working people were confirmed in squalor and disgusting hardship which could not be excused by reference to the unfortunate results of the world depression. The Labour party had declared its colonial policy but the party also had to remember that each colony had a separate problem - industrial protection, social needs, and political reform. 'Native' workers would have to be properly represented.[2]

One of the Colonial Advisory Committee's main problems was to find the best method of giving assistance to attempts to initiate trade unionism in the colonies. A. Creech Jones wrote that the Committee had received many requests from groups of workers in the colonies asking for advice on the formation of unions.[3] Affiliation to the T.U.C. itself was precluded, so the Committee decided to invite any colonial union which so desired to become associated with the Committee with a view to obtaining information and assistance in the development of their movements. This decision was confirmed by the General Council on 27 April 1938 and notified to all colonial trade union centres.[4] A model trade union constitution and explanatory notes were also prepared to help the colonial trade unions to build up their organisations. These were printed at the end of May 1938 and circulated to trade union centres, the

1. 1938 T.U.C. Report, p.205.
2. 'Tribune', 24 June 1938, p.5.
3. 'Empire', Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1938, p.15.
4. 1938 T.U.C. Report, p.206.

Colonial Office and the International Labour Office.[1]

The Committee also decided that it would be desirable to establish a special Native Labour Department in the Colonial Office. Creech Jones was the driving force behind the suggestion. He had written a memo for the A.C.I.Q. on the subject, stating that the Colonial Office had a Colonial Labour Committee which was an interdepartmental committee consisting of members of the Colonial Office, the Ministry of Labour and the Home Office, with the function of advising upon questions relating to Colonial Labour Legislation when they arose. Since the proceedings of this body were not published and it had no executive authority Creech Jones thought that there was a need for something more.[2] The Labour party A.C.I.Q. decided that the party should press for a special department to be put in charge of all labour in the Crown Colonies.[3] Creech Jones wrote to the Colonial Office and pressed the Colonial Secretary in the House of Commons on 21 July 1937.[4] He asked for a stronger committee in view 'of the recent disturbances in a number of colonies, the rapid growth of mining and industrialisation in Africa and elsewhere, the increasing interest of the I.L.O. in colonial labour matters and the necessity of building up a minimum of labour protection and welfare conditions now that large numbers of natives are being brought together attracted by wages.' He wanted a committee to review industrial legislation, keeping the need for it under continuous review and advising on new proposals where they were necessary. The Colonial Secretary, Ormsby-Gore,

1. ibid.
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 189, November 1937.
3. A.C.I.Q. Minutes, 10 June 1936.
4. 326 H.C.Deb., 5s., col. 2190, 21 July 1937. A. Creech Jones to Lord Dafferin, 3 August 1937, Creech Jones Papers Box 14.

refused this request for a new committee because he believed that the one that existed was adequate to deal with the problem. However, he did appoint a Colonial Labour Advisor, Major Orde Browne. Creech Jones was invited to meet Orde Browne by the new Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald.[1]

On 23 June 1938 a T.U.C. deputation consisting of H. Elvin, W. Citrine, G. Hicks, E. Edwards and Arthur Creech Jones called on the Colonial Secretary to discuss the proposal [2] for a special Native Labour Department. The T.U.C. delegation noted with satisfaction the appointment of a Labour Advisor to the Colonial Office. However, the T.U.C. considered that these steps did not go far enough, particularly in view of the grave labour unrest in many parts of the colonial empire and advocated the formation at the Colonial Office of a permanent Native Labour Department to give its whole attention to the subject of colonial labour. The introduction of such a Department would be facilitated by the presence in the Colonial Office of a nucleus of higher staff specialising in 'native' labour matters.[3] The Colonial Secretary promised to give the matter serious consideration but he decided not to set up a native labour department.

The T.U.C. passed a long motion on the subject of colonial labour at the 1938 Conference at Blackpool. G. Hicks, one of the members of the T.U.C. Colonial Advisory Committee, moved the motion on behalf of the General Council. This stated that Congress viewed with grave concern the

1. M. MacDonald to A. Creech Jones 14 July 1938, Creech Jones Papers Box 14.
2. 1938 T.U.C. Report, pp.206-207.
3. T.U.C. Colonial Advisory Committee Deputation 14/1, 23 June 1938.

persistence in many British Crown Colonies and Dependencies of deplorable conditions of 'native' labour which were incompatible with present-day social and industrial standards and which had been the main causes of the outbreaks in various West Indian colonies during the past year. Congress recognised that the Government was making some steps in the right direction in its new colonial policy outlined in the circular of August 1937[1] and urged the Government to insist that colonial administrations should give immediate effect to this policy. It was particularly necessary to introduce Labour departments and inspectorates in the colonies, promote trade unionism, make provisions for workmen's compensation, eliminate penal sanctions for labour offences, investigate the low standards of 'native' health, housing and wages and apply to all Colonies the relevant international conventions adopted by the International Labour Conference. 'Congress considers that in order to raise effectively the level of native labour conditions it is essential to introduce trade union principles, particularly that of collective bargaining, into the conduct of colonial industry and commercial and public enterprise and calls upon the Government to facilitate in every possible way the application of these principles. Congress further calls upon the Government to admit the native populations to an adequate share in the responsibilities of Government by a wide extension of the franchise and by adapting the colonial constitutions to modern democratic ideas; and to ensure free access to the land for all natives desirous of cultivating it.' Congress instructed the General Council to maintain the closest possible connection with

1. Cmd. 3760 (1938).

the trade union movements in the colonies and to assist them to the utmost of its power towards the development of trade union organisation and the realisation of civilised conditions of life and labour. The resolution was carried.[1]

During the year 1938-39 the T.U.C. Colonial Advisory Committee held one special and six extraordinary meetings. The special meeting was on 5 August when the Committee met the new Labour Advisor to the Colonial Office, Major Orde-Browne, prior to his mission of investigation into labour conditions in the West Indies. The other work of the Committee included discussion of the T.U.C.'s reply to the I.L.O. questionnaire to governments on the regulation of contracts of Employment of Indigenous workers, reception of a deputation from the West Indies on the conditions of workers in the colonies, discussion of the conditions in the West Indies, the construction of model trade union rules and making representations to the Colonial Office on African labour conditions in East and West Africa.[2] The lobbying had some effect for on 1 April 1939, the Colonial Office created a Social Service department to consider problems of 'native' health, labour and nutrition.

During the period 1935-39, the Labour party in Parliament criticised theGovernment for its complacency over the riots, its slowness to improve labour conditions as industrialisation progressed in the colonies, and its apparent readiness to consider an exchange of colonies in order to try to satisfy Germany's sense of grievance at its loss of colonies after the first world war. Labour's main spokesmen were Arthur Creech Jones, Morgan Jones, William Paling and William Lunn. Arthur Creech Jones was

1. 1938 T.U.C. Report, p.433.
2. 1939 T.U.C. Report, pp.234-236.

very active in asking parliamentary questions concerning individual cases of injustice to Africans. He was so active in this roll that Margery Perham called him the member for the Africans.[1] His private papers contain many cases which he took up on behalf of the indigenous peoples of the colonies.[2]

One of the main issues of policy that was considered during this period was the question of the amalgamation of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland.[3] The main pressure for amalgamation came from the white population of both Rhodesias. Green wrote a memo for the A.C.I.Q. He stated that the whites of Northern Rhodesia felt that by joining with Southern Rhodesia they would be better able to maintain white rule and the whites of Southern Rhodesia wished to control the enormous wealth of the copper mines of Northern Rhodesia.[4] The Labour party's attitude was put in the House of Commons by Arthur Creech Jones in the Colonial Office debate in June 1937 when he said that Northern Rhodesia was essentially a black man's country and Britain had a very definite responsibility to the 'natives' of the protectorate which could not be lightly surrendered. The 'native' people did not want amalgamation and the Labour party did not want to see a rigid application of past and other 'anti-native' laws applied in Northern Rhodesia as they were applied in Southern Rhodesia.[5] The Government appointed a Royal Commission in 1939 to consider the question

1. M. Perham 'The Colonial Reckoning' (London,1961),p.42.
2. Creech Jones Papers Box 18.
3. The question of amalgamating North and South Rhodesia had been proposed by the settlers of Northern Rhodesia in 1930. However, the issue did not develop into a major question because the Colonial Office civil servants, including Green, managed to persuade Lord Winterton, the Conservative spokesman, that the settlers' demands were extravagant.
4. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 185, April 1937.
5. 324 H.C. Deb., 5s., cols. 1059-1060, 2 June 1937.

of amalgamation.[1] It recommended that Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland should amalgamate under a single administration (Mr. Mainwaring, the Labour representative on the Commission, dissented), but that triple amalgamation should be deferred until the divergence between the 'native' policies followed in Southern Rhodesia and the protectorates was reconciled. 'Empire' declared that 'it is a genuine progressive interest that the encroachment of the colour bar should be blocked. Hence it is the duty of all progressives to exert every influence to ensure that the plan for bringing Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland under the control of the Southern Rhodesian parliament is well and truly torpedoed.'[2] The view of the Labour party's experts had been put at a Conference on Africa in 1938. Norman Leys had moved and carried a motion 'that nothing should be done to weaken the existing responsibilities of the Imperial Parliament and the Dominions Office and the Colonial Office for Northern and Southern Rhodesia'.[3]

Another problem connected with Northern Rhodesia was the question of migrant labour from Nyasaland to work on the copperbelts of Northern Rhodesia. The migrant African workers were kept in poor conditions by the Northern Rhodesian businessmen responsible for the Copperbelt. Buxton wrote a memo for the A.C.I.Q.[4] He argued that international agreements should be made providing for the enforcement of reasonable conditions for the recruitment and repatriation of migrant labour. This was followed by a memo from J.F.N. Green,[5] who had tried, unsuccessfully, to

1. Cmd. 5949 (March, 1939)
2. 'Empire', Vol. 2, No. 9, September 1939, pp134-6.
3. 'African Conference', 12 April 1938, Creech Jones Papers Box 23, File 1.
4. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 171A, October 1936.
5. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 175, November 1936.

persuade Northern Rhodesian businessmen to improve conditions for migrant labour while he had been a civil servant at the Colonial Office, working on the problems of Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. (He had retired from the Colonial Office in 1933 and joined the A.C.I.Q.) He advocated the policies he had proposed at the Colonial Office. He thought that assistance, free of Treasury control, should be given to Nyasaland by the British Government to try to reduce the contrast between Nyasaland and copper-rich Northern Rhodesia. He believed that individual recruitment should be discouraged and there should be migration of villages or groups of families instead. In general, barriers to the movement of labour within the British empire should be ended. The pass system should not be extended. Green also thought that the principles of taxation which had been laid down in Passfield's 1930 memo - that the white settlers should bear the brunt instead of the Africans - should be followed. The T.U.C. took the question of migrant labour in Northern Rhodesia to the I.L.O. and deputations were made to the Colonial Office but little was done to improve the conditions of the migrant labourers in Northern Rhodesia.

The A.C.I.Q. was in rather a frustrating position. When the Labour party was in office, its advice had been ignored by the Labour Colonial Secretaries in favour of the advice of the senior civil servants. When the Labour party was in opposition, it generally accepted the advice of the A.C.I.Q. but was unable to persuade the National Government to stray from the path 'mapped out' by the Colonial Office civil servants. The civil service was a strong pressure for continuity in colonial policy. There were a few radical civil servants, like J.F.N. Green, but most of the senior civil servants sympathised with the problems of the

white settlers, as did the Permanent Secretary, Sir Samuel Wilson. The civil service accepted the doctrine of 'trusteeship' but it did not feel there was need for any drastic change in British African policy. The civil service believed that African policy was generally on 'the right lines'. They thought that Britain would be exercising a 'trust' for the Africans for many years ahead. The civil service did not see its task as to prepare the Africans for independence as soon as possible. The Colonial Office saw its job as to preserve a balance between the interests of the settlers and those of the Africans.[1] The problem was that, because of the civil servants' background, education and training, the balance tended to come down more on the side of the settlers than the Africans.

The difficulty of protecting African interests in Africa was again illustrated over the question of the South African protectorates - Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland. General Hertzog wanted South Africa to take over responsibility for these protectorates but the problem was that in South Africa the interests of the Europeans were clearly paramount over the interests of the Africans. The policies of the South African government were against the stated aims of British colonial policy.

In April 1935, W.G. and M.L. Ballinger wrote a memo for the A.C.I.Q. on the question. They believed that if the protectorates were transferred, the last vestige of belief in Britain's 'protective and benignant power' would be destroyed.[2] Leonard Barnes[3] agreed that there should be no departure of policy. Nothing should be done which would

1. J.M. Lee, 'Colonial Development and Good Government', (Oxford, 1967)
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 155, April 1935.
3. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 156, May 1935.

encourage the transfer of protectorates to South Africa. However, by 1937, the A.C.I.Q. was adopting a more fatalistic point of view. Thomas Reid[1] pointed out that the reality of the situation was that if South Africa did not take over the protectorates with the consent of Britain, she would 'take them over without consent and not a single shot will be fired by Britain as a result'. He thought that the situation should be accepted - the best that could be done was to try to ensure that South Africa was given a mandate for the protectorates which she would honour 'probably as well as any other Mandatory Power'. 'The introduction of the world-conscience represented by the Mandates Commission, might have beneficial effects in South Africa even outside the territories of the Protectorates'. Julius Lewin, however, did not seem very hopeful that the interests of the Africans would be safeguarded in the protectorates.[2] The members of the A.C.I.Q., who were experts on South Africa, came to the conclusion that nothing much could be done to safeguard the rights of the Africans in the three South African protectorates. A mandate could be given, but, in reality, it was unlikely that South Africa would honour it. The difficulties of influencing South African policy had been shown earlier when the Labour party had tried unsuccessfully to protect migrant African labour working in the Rand mines. Julius Lewin[3] had pointed out the problem to the A.C.I.Q. but it had been powerless to influence the South African government.

The theme running through the speeches of the Labour party's spokesmen in the House of Commons during this period was that the indigenous peoples in the colonies could not

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 188, November 1937.
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 195, April 1938.
3. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 186, May 1937.

remain unaffected by the march of industrial civilisation and that care should be taken to exercise Britain's duty of trusteeship. Creech Jones stated in the Colonial Office debate in 1937 that the whole economy of the African continent was changing with the development of agricultural and mineral resources, the growth of communications and transport and the rise of industrialisation. Moreover, very fundamental alterations were occurring in the mode of life of the African and in his control of his environment. The process of detribalisation was going on rapidly and the old authority in the villages was disappearing. Creech Jones was glad that the Colonial Secretary had agreed to ratify the I.L.O. 'Convention on Native Recruitment' but he thought that the time was ripe for an inquiry into industrial practices in Africa so that they could discover how best the standards of life of the Africans could be protected against the ruthless exploitation which went on in many parts of the continent.[1]

Wedgwood thought that the West had started all the industrial problems in Africa by taking away their land and so forcing the Africans to work. He had come round to the idea that the Africans ought to be taught to become English working men so that they could organise themselves. He also thought that they should be represented in the British Houses of Parliament, although no-one else in the Labour party seemed very keen on the idea.[2]

In the Colonial Office debate of 1938 the same themes were repeated. William Paling asked whether the Government would change its policy of relentless exploitation of the

1. 324 H.C. Deb., 5s., cols. 1051-1061, 2 June 1937.
2. 324 H.C.Deb., 5s., cols. 1065-1074, 2 June 1937.

Africans in the interest of making profits for people in England and carry out the declarations of the Duke of Devonshire.[1] Creech Jones suggested that a system which subordinated the life of a colony to the interests of the profits of remote investors, instead of building up the social, economic, and political life of the people was fundamentally wrong.[2]

Aneurin Bevan wrote in 'Tribune' that the speeches of Creech Jones and William Paling should be published in order to educate the British people in the realities of Empire. The truth was, said Bevan, that the British capitalist class looked upon the Colonial Empire as a vast reserve of cheap labour, available for merciless exploitation, and they could no more be trusted to treat this labour decently than they could in Britain before the rise of the trade unions.[3]

The New Fabian Research Bureau held a Conference on Colonial Trusteeship in March 1938. Most of the Labour party's colonial 'experts' attended the Conference. Leys stated that Africa needed modern institutions to replace its old customs and tribes. He thought that African and British children had substantially the same mental capacities. The backwardness of the African was the responsibility of Britain for not providing the necessary education. 'Our aim should be to train the Africans for equality'. Leys was still advocating the equal rights policy, which he had consistently put forward throughout the interwar period, instead of the trusteeship policy, which was given most emphasis by the official Labour party pamphlets.

McGregor Ross thought that there was no reason why

1. 337 H.C.Deb., 5s., cols. 176-183, 14 June 1938.
2. 337 H.C.Deb., 5s., cols. 150-161, 14 June 1938.
3. 'Tribune' 17 June 1938, p.7.

Africans should not sit in the Kenya Legislative Council but he doubted whether the Africans had sufficient education to organise in trade unions. However, Leonard Barnes thought that steps should be taken by the T.U.C. to train Africans as trade union leaders. Barnes tended to be in favour of the Leys's policy of equal rights rather than the official policy of trusteeship. He stated that the proper relations with colonial peoples must be those of allies not trustees. He continued that indirect rule, ignoring as it did the effect of economic penetration in breaking up 'native' institutions, offered no real solution to the problem of self-government. It was more practicable to press for the development of Legislative Councils with adequate African representation on them.[1]

The question of the success or failure of indirect rule was debated in the A.C.I.Q. by Norman Leys and Professor W.M. Macmillan, concerning the Gold Coast. Leys thought that indirect rule was an open failure. 'The tribal institutions of the Gold Coast are so unfit to provide what a modern society needs and desires as King Arthur's Court would be to perform the functions of the L.C.C. If the Africans were frankly told that self-government was the aim, they themselves might work out new tribal organs, especially, if they were given representatives on the Legislature.[2] Professor Macmillan thought that the strong point of indirect rule of the better 'Cameron' type was that, though it probably evaded the problem of securing representative control of central government, it at least gave the Native Authority both real power and the financial means to use that power - a regular refund of local tax.

1. New Fabian Research Bureau, Conference on Colonial Trusteeship, Oxford 1920, March 1938.
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo 189A, November 1937.

However, he thought that a more adequate form of representation of local units at the centre would have to be evolved.[1] Macmillan agreed that indirect rule was 'no panacea'.[2]

C.R. Buxton adopted the middle position of thinking that indirect rule should be accepted as a form of local government, but it did not provide the machinery for the central government of a colony. Buxton thought that the model of the Legislative Council should be kept for central government but the executive power vested in the Governor should be transferred to a Ministry responsible to the Council as soon as the Council became sufficiently representative of the whole population, coloured as well as white.[3]

W. Benson, writing for the Fabian Society, thought that a lot of mystical nonsense was talked about indirect rule. It was the usual form of administration by weak empires interested mainly in taxation. Nevertheless, it was of some value if it was directed towards the association in local government of all the members of a community. The goal should be democratic, parliamentary, non-racial government. The types of councils that existed representing the government, racial and economic interests were more a hindrance than a help. No increase in their power should be granted to them unless it was accompanied by abolition of colour bars. He thought that economic councils developing out of land boards would be of greater value to transitional colonies, while the ground was being prepared for national councils through education in local government.[4] J.F.N. Green also seemed to think that indirect rule had served

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 197, 1937.
2. Manchester Guardian, 24 April 1939.
3. C.R. Buxton, note on the C.O. vote, 7 June 1939, A. Creech Jones Papers Box 16.
4. W. Benson, 'The Development of Colonial Peoples' (Fabian Society) A. Creech Jones Papers Box 17.

some useful purpose in the Gold Coast.[1]

The division among the experts seemed to be that some members such as Barnes and Leys regarded indirect rule as serving no useful purpose because it only encouraged old tribal institutions which prevented the growth of democracy. Macmillan and Buxton were doubtful about its value but thought that it could, in a modified way, serve as a basis for local government. Benson and Green, while recognising that it was no panacea, thought that indirect rule could be of some value. Official policy followed Macmillan, Buxton, Benson and Green, in thinking that indirect rule could serve as a basis of local government but it was not very clear about how it could be used.

Leys was trying to make sure that the party was committed to definite action if it achieved office again. He wrote to Creech Jones at the beginning of 1938 to say that the Labour party should put forward a resolution in the House that the preparation of the common people for self-government should be the chief aim of the governments of all the Dependencies of the Colonial Empire and that the Governors should be directed to make a public announcement of this policy. It was imperative that it should be made public in Africa. He thought that if such a resolution could be put through great work would have been done.[2] Creech Jones replied that he would urge the general points in the next C.O. debate. However, he was not able to achieve the declaration Leys wanted.[3]

1. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 184, Health Conditions in the Gold Coast, J.F.N. Green
2. N. Leys to A. Creech Jones, 20 January 1938, Creech Jones Papers, Box 2.
3. A. Creech Jones to N. Leys, 2 February 1938, ibid.

Norman Leys wrote again to Arthur Creech Jones in February 1939 to urge the necessity of a programme for immediate action by the next Labour Colonial Secretary: 'From 1918 to 1929 I did all I could to get the party committed to certain actions. Passfield wouldn't pay the least attention, and when the Advisory Committee refused to do anything to try to make him I resigned. What I suggest now is that you should give notice to Woolf of a proposal to appoint a sub-committee to draw up a programme for immediate execution by the next Labour Secretary of State at the Colonial Office. Just how much it ought to contain is the problem since we would all I hope agree about our entire programme but not perhaps about the things that ought to be done first and at once.'[1]

Creech Jones wrote back to say that he agreed that 'the party ought to have a programme for immediate action. So far we have relied on vagueness of expression which has not brought too great a credit on the party when Labour had had the opportunity of getting something done. I will raise the question on the Advisory Committee. I hope you have not definitely excluded yourself from it, for I was very happy to see you present at the last meeting.'[2] (Leys had not officially rejoined the A.C.I.Q. but he occasionally attended its meetings and presented memos.)

Leys wrote a memo for the A.C.I.Q. in February 1939 as part of his campaign to draw up a programme for immediate execution. In this, he stated that racial discrimination had long ceased to be a danger to be guarded against but had become an established fact.[3] By 1939, Leys thought

1. Leys to A. Creech Jones, 9 February 1939, A. Creech Jones Papers, Box 14.
2. Creech Jones to N. Leys, 10 February 1939, Creech Jones Papers, Box 14.
3. A.C.I.Q. Memo 205, February 1939.

that the question of racial discrimination had become the main issue in all the dependencies. The realisation of this had been obscured by the false idea that the indigenous inhabitants of the colonies led lives of their own. The truth was, wrote Leys, that the people of the Colonial Empire lived under British law and had been enlisted into British industries. Everything still remained to be done. When Lord Passfield's White Paper reached Kenya, Lord Delamere had said in the Legislature that compliance with the White Paper's passage on racial discrimination alone would involve the amendment of over 30 laws. None had been amended by 1939. Kenya was the most clear example of discrimination but discrimination was becoming plainer everywhere. Leys thought that the advent of the next Labour Government would increase the probability of explosions if the hopes it raised were found to be vain. This made it very important for the Labour party to have ready in advance a policy of action, including measures of reform. What was necessary, thought Leys, was an early public announcement that measures would be taken to put an end to the privileges now enjoyed by the minorities and the disabilities suffered by the majorities. Some specific measures should be enacted immediately a Labour Government came into Office as an earnest that others would follow. The problem was how to ensure that these measures would be taken within a month of taking office. Leys warned that the Labour party should always bear in mind how strong the opposition would be; the Conservative party, the settlers, the civil service, the colonial administration and the Governors and the press were against radical change. No recent Governor in Africa had a policy so near to the Labour party's as Sir Donald Cameron, yet in his book he rejected the view that it was for the

Africans to decide the rate and extent of the changes which must ensue in their lives.[1]

No-one, declared Leys, denied the gravity of the industrial causes of unrest in the Dependencies. What made all the difference and what was the source of the specific evils of the colonial system was the semi-serfdom which had no single root as chattel slavery had, but, especially in Africa, was the product of numerous restrictive contrivances. 'It may prove to be the case that the greatest danger to our national security is not Hitler's Germany but the actions of those many subjects of the crown who awaken to find themselves half-slave and half-free.'[2]

In the Colonial Office debate of 1939, William Paling said that although some things had been done with regard to the appointment of labour advisers and labour inspectorates in some colonies, the amount that had been done in relation to what remained to be done was positively insignificant. In the Gold Coast it would take 700 years before the whole population would be able to read and write if the same rate of progress was maintained. In East Africa even that figure would be optimistic. Wage-earners could not afford to pay for education out of a wage of 8s a month. Education was only being given to those who could afford it.[3]

Creech Jones asked that the African should be permitted to be trained in the art of government and allowed to take his place on the various councils. He thought that the people of the colonies should be enabled to stand on their own feet as soon as possible and take a larger share in the government of their territories.[4]

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1. Sir Donald Cameron, 'Principles of Native Administration' (Lagos, 1935)
2. A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 205, February 1939.
3. 348 H.C.Deb., 5s., cols. 457-466, 7 June 1939.
4. ibid., cols. 484-496, 7 June 1939.

Colonel Wedgwood thought that the democratic control of the colonial administration by the House of Commons had never been lower or more feeble. He thought that direct rule should be instituted in the African colonies as a natural step towards responsible government. Indirect rule was bolstering up landlord and aristocratic domination in the African colonies. The Africans' own chiefs had become landlords. Wedgwood thought that the year that had just passed had been the most damaging year to British prestige and traditions with its riots and disorders.[1]

Noel-Baker believed that industrialisation and education were changing the lives of the colonial peoples at an unprecedented rate. There was a need to reorganise colonial administration and policy. There should be no colour bar, labour conditions and wages should be improved, and the I.L.O. supported. In Nyasaland the emigration of recruited labour abroad should be stopped or the social life of the country would be destroyed. More money should be provided for the training and education of the Africans and there was a necessity for some greater development of parliamentary control over colonial administration.[2]

The Labour party as a whole discussed colonial policy at the 1939 Party Conference. The Rev. R.W. Sorensen M.P. moved a resolution on behalf of the Leyton West district Labour party. The resolution stated that the purpose of colonial policy was the moral and material welfare of the indigenous peoples. It urged that the scandalous conditions which had been exposed in the West Indies should be ended and a rapid advance towards self-government and social equality

1. 348 H.C.Deb., 5s., cols. 524-528, 7 June 1939.
2. ibid. cols 544-552, 7 June 1939.

be made. The franchise should be widened, the trade union movement encouraged, land reforms should be introduced, and agriculture and industry developed according to a comprehensive plan. African self-government should be encouraged, education promoted, and medical and social services improved. The Africans' inherent right to their own land should be enforced. The motion declared that these policies could best be achieved by an extension to all such colonies of the mandate system of the League of Nations. In no circumstances and on no conditions should any colonial peoples be handed over to 'the merciless misrule of fascist dictators whose racial doctrines and aggressive militarism render them wholly unfit for such a trust.'[1]

Sorensen said, in support of the motion, that the tragic conditions of labour in the West Indies or the strike that took place in West Africa concerning the cocoa industry or the driving of the Africans from the Kenyan Highlands or the facts concerning the maltreatment of indigenous peoples and the introduction of sedition laws and goals showed that the colonies were still looked upon as fields for exploitation by the capitalist class. The Labour Party should lay down the principle that the peoples of Africa were as entitled to self-government as the people of Britain, although there were difficulties, psychological and otherwise. Sorensen declared that 'unless we are determined to apply Democracy to those other areas, to assist these other peoples towards economic development and political dignity, then undoubtedly this country will suffer in the days that are ahead.'

An amendment was moved by C. Meredith (University Labour Federation) to the resolution. This stated that 'in view of

1. Labour Party Conference Report 1939, p.310.

the deterioration of the international situation and the failure of aggressive states to respect collective agreements, the Conference cannot place any faith in schemes for the Internationalisation of Colonial areas or the admission of such states to an equal control with the Democracies over the fate of the Colonies.'[1] Meredith argued against an extension of the Mandate system and declared that the Labour Movement should proceed to the emancipation of the Colonial peoples as had been pursued in the Soviet Union.

Creech Jones suggested that the Conference should reject the amendment and accept the resolution which was nearer to previous declarations of Labour policy than the negative attitude assumed in the amendment. A great change was coming over the face of Africa, industrialisation was obtaining a hold and resulting in the de-tribalisation of large numbers of African peoples and their segregation in mines and factories and other industrial undertakings with all the resultant squalor, misery and suffering which had occurred in Britain a hundred years earlier. The Africans were up against the penetration of Western capitalism and Western industrialisation and therefore it was vitally important that they should be armed with the methods of resistance that the workers of Europe had discovered. 'While we would seek to preserve what is good in native institutions, do not let us be hoodwinked by anthropologists and those who believe in indirect rule and who would ask us to work through the Chiefs in developing the principles of Democracy, the principles of trade unionism, or the principles of industrial protection.'[2] There should be a whole series of new social services in respect of health,

1. Labour Party Conference Report 1939, p.311
2. ibid., p.313.

education, etc., and there should be adequate industrial protection, a proper law for compensation in factories, proper wages should be paid and there should be an extension of the political rights of the natives. The Labour party should insist that Britain should be prepared for international supervision and responsibility over the colonies.

Philip Noel-Baker M.P. summed up for the N.E.C. and accepted the Leyton resolution, welcoming Sorensen's proposal for a conference of representatives of the colonial peoples. Noel-Baker thought that there were three essential points about extending the mandate system: first, the interests of the indigenous peoples should be supreme; second, there should not be exclusive economic exploitation by the governing power, but economic equality for all the nations of the world; and third, the administration of the governing power should be subject to the control and supervision of an international authority. He believed that the mandate system had proved better than the old colonial system and that it had raised the standard of colonial government: 'We are certain that by the mandate system we can bring these people through to self-government and greater prosperity and happiness than they have ever known before.'[1] Conference accepted the arguments of the N.E.C.; the amendment was defeated and the resolution was accepted by a large majority.

The Labour party again rejected the revolutionary course of immediate emancipation in favour of the policy of trusteeship and preparation of the Africans for eventual self-government by education and international supervision. However, there was still no indication of how long the African colonies would be waiting for self-government.

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1. Labour Party Conference Report 1939, p.315.

Leys's suggestion that the party should prepare a clear programme for immediate action had not been taken up. Reid's demand that the party should prepare 'carefully worked out economic plans on socialist lines'[1] had also been ignored. The official Labour party policy for the African colonies was still vague and there was still no sense of urgency about preparing the Africans for independence. There had been surprisingly little development in the Labour party's policy towards the African colonies during the interwar period.

The party attempted to protect African interests in Parliament in the thirties but it was difficult to influence the National Governments which were dominated by the Conservatives. The Labour party was numerically weak in the House of Commons in the thirties; after the 1931 General Election it only had 52 M.P.s and after the 1935 Election, it had 154. The Conservatives, by comparison, returned 473 M.P.s at the 1931 General Election and 432 at the 1935 General Election.[2] Arthur Creech Jones was a vigorous champion of African rights, and Milner, Lunn, Morgan Jones, Paling and Wedgwood spoke and asked questions on African colonial affairs, but they did not have much impact on the colonial policy of the National Governments, except, perhaps, when Malcolm MacDonald was Colonial Secretary (1935, 1938-1940). The other National Government Colonial Secretaries, Cunliffe-Lister (1931-35), J.H. Thomas (1935-1936) and Ormsby-Gore (1936-1938), were not sympathetic to Labour's policy. It might have been thought that J.H. Thomas, who had been a Labour Colonial

1. T. Reid, 'A Socialist looks at the Empire', Paper for the New Fabian Research Bureau, 1938.
2. D. Butler and A. Sloman, 'British Political Facts, 1900-1975', pp.183-184.

Secretary, would have been favourably disposed towards his former colleagues, but, as has been shown above, he had not been very keen on implementing Labour policy even in 1924. Thomas was more suited to be a Colonial Secretary in a Conservative-dominated Government than a Labour Government. Beaverbrook wrote to Thomas in 1935 to congratulate him for standing up against those who wanted to give away parts of the British Empire.[1] After Thomas resigned, as a result of an indiscretion over the budget, McGregor Ross wrote to Paling: 'Jimmy Thomas having gone (thank heaven!) could you get into touch with Lunn, Milner, Morgan Jones and Buxton to bring the actual state of affairs abruptly to the notice of the new Secretary of State for the Colonies.'[2] The Labour party derived no benefit from Thomas being the National Government Colonial Secretary. Cunliffe-Lister and Ormsby-Gore were also indifferent to the pleas of Labour's African experts. McGregor Ross wrote to Morgan Jones, when Cunliffe-Lister was Colonial Secretary, that the prospect of overthrowing Cunliffe-Lister was 'delicious' but there was not much hope of changing African colonial policy ' among all the vast preoccupations engendered by India and Hitler.'[3] Ormsby-Gore was sympathetic to the white settlers in Africa, having been a member of the East Africa Commission of 1925, which had produced a report favourable to the settlers. The only National Government Colonial Secretary who was sympathetic to the aims of the Labour party's A.C.I.Q. and its pro-African M.P.s was Malcolm MacDonald.

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1. M. Beaverbrook to J.H. Thomas, 24 December 1935, 15 February 1936, J.H. Thomas Papers UI625, C27,C28.
2. McGregor Ross to W. Paling, 10 May 1936, McGregor Ross Papers.
3. McGregor Ross to Morgan Jones, 21 March 1935, ibid.

Malcolm MacDonald was only Colonial Secretary for a brief spell in 1935 but returned in 1938 to be responsible for the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act which, unlike earlier colonial development acts, was primarily concerned with the development and welfare of the colonies, not with solving Britain's unemployment problems.[1] Malcolm MacDonald was largely in agreement with Creech Jones over colonial questions and knew some of the Labour party's colonial experts, particularly, Professor W.M. Macmillan. MacDonald fought a battle with the Treasury to secure the money for the Colonial Development and Welfare Act. Eventually, with the support of Neville Chamberlain, he managed to squeeze £5m. out of the Treasury for the Colonial Development Fund. The Labour party supported MacDonald's efforts to pass the Colonial Developmentand Welfare Act of 1940. The only criticism was from Labour M.P.s such as Wedgwood who thought that MacDonald had failed to gain enough money for the fund. MacDonald had originally asked for £10m, but had to be content with £5m.[2]

In the thirties, the Labour party in Parliament acted as a pressure group to protect African interests and encourage a more positive colonial policy. The later aim met with some success when Malcolm MacDonald was Colonial Secretary but, before that, Labour's pro-Africa M.P.s and A.C.I.Q. had little success apart from securing the appointment of an adviser of colonial labour, Major Orde-Browne. The National Government Colonial Secretaries, apart from M. MacDonald, were sympathetic to the white settlers, and the public was largely indifferent to the problems of Africa. Unemployment in Britain and the

1. J.M. Lee, 'Colonial Development and Good Government' (Oxford, 1967).
2. Interview with Malcolm MacDonald, 21 August 1973.

aggressive moves of Germany and Italy seemed much more pressing problems to most people in Britain than the rights of Africans.

CONCLUSION

As was stated in the introduction the aim of this thesis is not to castigate the Labour party for not achieving socialism according to Karl Marx. It is obvious that the Labour party has not achieved the abolition of the capitalist system which, according to Marx, was the root cause of human conflict, alienation and false consciousness. This thesis is not concerned with whether this Marxist vision is true or not but with whether the Labour party has made a vigorous effort to implement its own version of 'socialism' as outlined in its policy statements such as 'Labour and the New Social Order' and 'Labour and the Nation' and in the writings of people such as Tawney. This version of 'socialism' concentrates on democratic methods to try to reform society from one which is primarily based on competition and the struggle for profits to one which is based on co-operation and social justice - a society where there are not great inequalities of wealth and where there are no great differences in opportunity. Instead of concentrating on the Labour party's domestic policy, a study has been made in the area of colonial policy towards Africa to ascertain whether the Labour party's avowed devotion to social justice spread to Britain's colonial empire. This area is particularly interesting because it is one in which the Labour party is generally thought (for example by M. Perham and R. Hinden)[1] to have achieved the objectives of a democratic socialist party by showing humanitarian concern for the problems of the people of the colonies and trying to prepare them for independence by education and extending a helping hand. The period studied has been the

1. M. Perham, 'The Colonial Reckoning', (London, 1961)
R. Hinden, 'Empire and After', (London, 1949).

interwar period because it was during this period that the Labour party formulated its policy for the colonies and laid the groundwork for the 1945-51 Labour Government. It was during this period that the Labour party became the main opposition party to the Conservatives and set the guidelines for its future development. African opinion was not clearly developed; the Labour party was one of the main voices protecting African interests during the interwar period.

One of the difficulties of studying the interwar period in relation to the Labour party is that, although the Labour party did become the main opposition party during this period, it did not achieve complete power. Its two brief periods of government were periods of minority governments, during which it was dependent on the Liberal party for support. It could be argued that this dependence restricted the Labour party and prevented it from pursuing the policies which it would have pursued if it had achieved a full majority. However, a study of Cabinet documents, Colonial Office minutes, private papers and memoirs suggests that the Labour ministers did not feel unduly restricted as far as colonial policy was concerned. There is no indication in the relevant papers that the Labour ministers felt restricted over colonial affairs by dependence on the Liberal party in Parliament. There is never any mention that the Labour Party ministers would have liked to pursue a certain policy but were held back because they were afraid that it would be defeated in the House of Commons. As far as colonial policy is concerned it would seem that the same policies would have been followed by the two ministers concerned,[1] J.H. Thomas and Lord Passfield, even if the

1. This is also the point of view of Brett, op.cit., p.62.

Labour party had had a comfortable majority. Whether different ministers would have chosen different policies is another question. Before an assessment is given of the Labour party's performance in office, it is necessary to sum up the Labour party's policy.

The Labour party issued three policy statements on colonial affairs in Africa between the wars[1] and another was issued during the war.[2] The policy statements between the wars were all very similar, there was little development in policy. The main theme of these policy statements was that two different policies were being pursued in Africa: the 'African' policy, mainly in West Africa and the 'European' policy in most of East Africa, particularly Kenya. The 'African' policy was considered by the Labour party to be the better policy. In West Africa and the mandate, Tanganyika, the Africans kept the land and produced crops which were sold to European combines. There was also a policy of 'indirect rule', by which the African chiefs played a part in the administration of the colonies. The Labour party tended to discuss East Africa in terms of Kenya, where the problem of the white settlers came to dominate most of the discussion about African colonial policy between the wars. In Kenya, the white settlers had taken the best land to cultivate themselves and the Africans were driven by economic circumstances to work for the white man in order to earn the money to pay taxation, which was higher for the Africans than the white settlers. Despite paying higher taxes, the Africans had

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1. 'The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy' (1920); 'Labour and the Empire: Africa', (1926); 'The Colonial Empire' (1933).
2. The Colonies, (1943).

less money spent on their education per capita than the whites. More money was also spent per capita on other services for the whites, such as roads, than on other services for Africans. The Africans also had less civil rights than the white settlers, and hardly any say in the running of the East African colonies. Representation in the Legislative Council was on a communal basis and not on the principle of every nationality having the same voting system. Africans were not directly represented, missionaries usually representing them. This communal system was used to give the white settlers more seats than they would have warranted if voting had been proportional to numerical strength. The Africans and the Indian community were very critical of the communal franchise.

The main emphasis of the Labour party's colonial policy between the wars was to try to apply the 'West African' policy to all parts of Africa which meant restoring the land to the Africans, giving them equal education and taxation with the white settlers and preparing them for eventual self-government, starting by a training in local government. The Labour party endorsed the policy of 'trusteeship' which had been put forward in Devonshire's White Paper of 1923,[1] where it had been stated that whenever there was a conflict of interests in East Africa, the interests of the Africans would be paramount over those of the white settlers and the Indian community. Both parties upheld this policy but it appeared that the Labour party would be more determined to put it into operation since the Labour party did not have the links with the white settlers which many members of the Conservative party had.

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1. Memo on Indians in Kenya, Cmd.1922, 1923.

The Labour party's colonial policy was made mainly by E.D. Morel, Leonard Woolf and C.R. Buxton. Other members of the A.C.I.Q. made comments and provided constructive criticisms, particularly Norman Leys, McGregor Ross and J.F.N. Green. Morel and Woolf wrote the first pamphlet, Woolf and Buxton, the next two after receiving advice from the A.C.I.Q. and Woolf wrote the 1943 pamphlet, again after consulting the A.C.I.Q. Morel and Woolf were mainly responsible for the idea that all the African colonies should follow the example of West Africa. C.R. Buxton was particularly keen on the idea of pursuing an 'open door' policy of free trade in the colonies and providing international supervision of Britain's colonial administration. Woolf and Green were both Fabian ex-civil servants and believed in gradual progress through education and local government. Green also put emphasis on economic development. Leys and Ross were professional men (Leys was a doctor and Ross a civil engineer), who had worked in East Africa and been disgusted at the way the black population was being denied its rights. They had both joined the Labour party via the I.L.P. Leys was particularly keen on an equal rights policy and thought that the Labour party should put more emphasis on pursuing a policy of equal rights in the African colonies rather than pursuing a policy of trusteeship. He thought that the trusteeship policy of looking after the Africans until they were 'ready' for self-government was 'hopelessly vague and sentimental' and put the Africans 'into splints' when what they needed was to be 'allowed freedom'.[1] Leys thought that the Labour party should make a firm commitment to abolishing all discriminatory legislation as soon as the party achieved power and instituting a policy

1. Leys to Harris, 17 February 1929 (A.S.A.P.S. Papers).

of complete equality between white and black in Africa, which would have meant an end to reserving land for the whites. It would also have meant equal taxation for blacks and whites, equal expenditure per capita on education, roads and other services for blacks and whites and making a declaration that the aim of colonial government was to give self-government to the Africans as soon as possible. There should have been an equal franchise with an education test and white people should not have been given a vote if it was not allowed to the black people. The party should have done all it could by a programme of education and training to enable universal franchise to be instituted as soon as possible. Leys did not place much faith in a policy of indirect rule, believing that it was not preparing the Africans for self-government but preserving out-dated tribal institutions which were dominated by the tribal chiefs and did not provide a basis for democratic government. Leys's policies of equal rights were themselves not completely clear but the main idea was that all discriminatory legislation should be repealed. Leys himself did not believe that the Africans should be given immediate self-government during the interwar period, but he felt that a greater sense of urgency should be devoted to colonial policy and he disliked the policy of trusteeship with its overtones of white superiority. Leys, and a few others in the Labour party such as Fenner Brockway, did regard the Africans as of equal capabilities to white men but there were many in the party who suffered from a tremendous sense of superiority in relation to Africans. The attitude of many was similar to that of the Webbs who wrote in 1913 that the Africans should be regarded as children and 'it would be idle to pretend that anything like effective self-government, even as regards strictly local affairs, can be introduced for

many generations to come and in some cases, conceivably never.'[1] The Webbs did write this in 1913, when no one was advocating immediate self-government for the Africans, but it does indicate the Webbs' attitude of racial superiority. The Webbs, and many others in the Labour party, thought that very leisurely progress should be made towards self-government for the Africans. The main difference between Leys and people such as the Webbs, was that Leys believed in 1918 that independence should come in about 20 years, and great efforts should be made by the colonial power to give independence as soon as possible; Webb, however, thought that many generationswould have to pass before the Africans were 'ready'. He thought that there was no immediate hurry to achieve independence.

Leys'ideas about equal rights did have some influence on the Labour party: the 1943 colonial policy statement did show more concern at the existence of colour bars in the African colonies. Another slight change in the 1943 statement was concerning the development of the African economies. The interwar colonial policy statements had not shown much concern with the development of the African economies. Although the 1933 statement had stated that the aim of Labour policy was 'Socialisation and self-government',[2] there was not much indication of how this socialisation of agriculture and industry was to be achieved. The main reasm for this lack of economic analysis was that Morel, Woolf and Buxton did not place much emphasis on the development of modern agriculture and industry in Africa. However, in the late thirties, Green and Reid tried to make

1. Quoted J. Winter 'Socialism and the Challenge of War' (London, 1974),p.48.
2. The Colonial Empire, op.cit., p.4.

the Labour party more aware of the need for economic development in the colonies. They tended to place this before political development and Leys argued with Reid that political development should come first.[1] It would seem to be the case that both were needed together but there were some in the Labour party who hoped that the African could be spared the process of industrial development. Wedgwood thought that Britain should not try to impose its own civilisation on the Africans. He thought the African should be left alone on his own land and should not be pressed into the labour market. The Labour party during this period was not really concerned with the question of whether the African colonies should give priority to agricultural or industrial development. Its main concern for most of the period was to make sure that Africans had enough land to be self-sufficient as in West Africa. The main idea was to prevent the African from being exploited by the white man. Most of the Labour party's experts were wary of economic development because they felt that it might lead to greater exploitation of the African. As Brett says, 'Labour, at least until the late thirties, took little positive interest in the development debate except with regard to the protection of African labour'.[2] This attitude was also supported by the unions, particularly Ernest Bevin who was worried that if there was economic development in the African colonies this would lead to competition for British workers. Therefore, for the inter-war period the Labour party devoted little thought to how African agriculture and industry could be developed. It was M. MacDonald who did the most for the economic development of the colonies during the war and the Labour party responded

1. Gupta, op.cit., p.279.
2. E.A. Brett, op.cit., p.60.

to these developments in its war statement on colonial policy. However, the basic policy outlined in 1943 was still that which had been put forward in 1920.

The I.L.P. provided strong criticism of Labour party policy in the 1930s, after the I.L.P. had left the Labour party. In the 1920s, I.L.P. policy was similar to Labour policy because the I.L.P. Empire Committee and the Labour party's A.C.I.Q. had an overlapping membership - Buxton, Leys, Ross and Woolf. The main influences on the A.C.I.Q. were Buxton and Woolf, the chairman and the secretary, but people such as Leys and Laski wielded more influence on the I.L.P. committee, therefore the I.L.P. policy, although basically the same as Labour party policy, had a greater sense of urgency about it. In the 1930s, the I.L.P. repudiated Labour policy totally. I.L.P. policy became much more radical and Labour policy was continually criticised in the I.L.P. press, particularly, the 'New Leader'. Reginald Reynolds and George Padmore were critical of Labour policy because of its paternalistic assumptions of white superiority. Reynolds thought that Transport House treated the Africans as if they were 'pigs being fattened for the market'. He believed that the Labour party's empire policy was 'the theory of fascism disguised in Gladstonian rags.'[1] By this, he meant that the Labour party did not regard the Africans as equals but as inferiors who could not make any contribution themselves and must wait until 'London', meaning Transport House and Parliament, deemed they were 'fit' for self-government. The 'Gladstonian rags' were the Labour party's attachment to the Liberal principles of free trade and international

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1. see above pp.374-375.

supervision for the colonies. Reynolds's arguments were propaganda rather that detailed analysis: it was unfair to brand the Labour party as fascist in the same manner as Hitler's Germany. However, Reynolds did have a point for many leading figures in the Labour party, particularly Sidney Webb/Lord Passfield, did regard the Africans as different and, in many ways, inferior to white men. Therefore, the colonial power would have to look after them as children until they had 'grown up'. However, there were some, mainly on the left of the Labour party, such as Leys, Brockway, and, to a certain extent Wedgwood and McGregor Ross, who did not suffer from this handicap. It was these people who were mainly responsible for the good reputation which the Labour party made among some African leaders, who were befriended and helped when they came to London. It is true that most people at the time did assume this attitude of racial superiority but one might have expected the Labour party to have made more of an effort to counteract these ideas of racial superiority rather than, in the main, to agree with them.

It is easy to criticise the Labour party's colonial policy in the interwar period with the benefit of hindsight. However, during this period, Britain was largely preoccupied with her own economic troubles and most people in Britain had never travelled outside the country, let alone to the African colonies. The same probably applied to the P.L.P. It was the people who had most direct contact with the colonies such as Leys, Brockway and Ross who were urging the party to put more effort into its colonial policy and treat the Africans as potential equals rather than a different species. The main criticisms that can be made of the Labour party's colonial policy during this period

were: (1) It did not put enough emphasis on a policy of equal rights for all in the colonies irrespective of class, colour or creed: (2) There was too great a readiness to believe that everything was perfect in West Africa, when, in that area, the Africans were mainly dependent on selling crops to huge combines which were more interested in making profits than furthering the interests of the Africans (also, in West Africa, there was the question of whether too much power was given to African chiefs and whether this restricted the democratic progress of their people): (3) There was not enough emphasis on the economic development of the colonies because the people who made the party's policy, Morel, Buxton and Woolf placed most emphasis on protecting the African from exploitation by the white man rather than developing African industry and agriculture (they hoped that the Africans could be spared the process of industrialisation which had caused so much misery in Britain): (4) There was too little sense of urgency in the Labour party's policy statements and there was no indication of what sort of timescale the party was working on; the policy was rather vague about the process by which the Africans would gain independence and when it would come. Nevertheless, the policy would have made a difference if it had been implemented and would have put some substance into the promise that British colonial policy was ensuring that the interests of the Africans were 'paramount' over all other groups in Africa. Leonard Woolf wrote that if the Labour party had tried to put its policy into effect, it would have severely hurt the interests of the white colonial population and he expected them to 'fight like cats in a corner'[1] to prevent the implementation of the policy. The

1. L. Woolf Papers, Memo on the Problems of East Africa.

policy did worry the white settlers. This is clearly shown in M. Perham's journal of her travels in East Africa at the time of the Second Labour Government.[1]

Despite the weaknesses of Labour's policy, it had been worked out by the beginning of the 1920s, printed in a pamphlet, discussed in books by leading party members and presented in parliament as Labour policy by Labour's main colonial spokesmen, Wedgwood and Spoor. There was no reason for a Labour Colonial Secretary to state that the party had not worked out a policy and he would therefore have to follow the lead given by his civil servants. The A.C.I.Q. had worked out a policy for a Labour Colonial Secretary to follow if he had the inclination. J.H. Thomas was not a suitable choice for Colonial Secretary in the first Labour Government. He had no experience and knowledge of the colonies, he was a trade unionist who was more interested in Britain's domestic problems than the problems of the Empire. He tried to refuse the post because he felt that it was not important enough for him until it was pointed out that the office was high up the official Cabinet list. His friend Lord Beaverbrook congratulated him on achieving one of 'the biggest offices in the stall.'[2] There were more suitable people in the Labour party who had shown a continued interest in the problems of the empire. Josiah Wedgwood would have been the most appropriate choice since he had been Labour's main Colonial Spokesman in the House of Commons, where he had put forward the A.C.I.Q.'s colonial policy forcefully and had committed the party to looking at the question of communal franchises in the empire with a view to their abolition. Wedgwood had made an impact in the

1. M. Perham 'East African Journey', (London, 1976)
2. Beaverbrook to Thomas, 23 January 1924, Thomas Papers.

House of Commons and was talked about as a possible leader of the party but he and MacDonald were not on good terms and because MacDonald may have regarded him as a rival, the Prime Minister may have decided not to give Wedgwood a post which he wanted and where he might have made an impact. Another factor may have been that MacDonald felt that Wedgwood would stir up too much trouble with the settlers. Morel, who had worked with MacDonald before the war, would have also been a more appropriate choice than Thomas; Morel was an expert on colonial policy and the co-author of the A.C.I.Q.'s statement on colonial policy. MacDonald probably thought that he was not an important enough figure in the Labour party to be given the Colonial Office. However, he did suggest to Thomas that perhaps he should have Morel as his private secretary. This suggestion was rejected by Thomas because he felt that Morel was an extremist who would not be acceptable to the settler interest in Africa. MacDonald did nothing to suggest to Thomas that the aim of Labour's policy was to reduce the power of the settlers, not let them determine who should be in the Labour Colonial Office.[1] The appointment of Thomas as Labour's first Colonial Secretary was an example of the low priority which MacDonald placed on trying to achieve the policy that had been worked out by Labour's A.C.I.Q. MacDonald made no effort to utilise the A.C.I.Q. to provide detailed advice to the Colonial Secretary on how the Labour party could achieve its colonial policy. Instead of putting the emphasis on listening to the party experts, Thomas, the Colonial Secretary, became very dependent on the civil servants of the Colonial Office who

1. Morel Papers.

regarded the Labour party experts as 'extremists'.

Thomas made no effort to put the Labour party's policy into effect when he was Colonial Secretary. Brett's assessment is that Thomas was 'doubtless the worst Colonial Secretary of State this century, who made no noticeable attempt to understand any of the problems with which he had to deal and therefore invariably allowed matters to take the course already set for them.[1] This assessment seems to be borne out by the facts. Thomas failed to honour the Labour party's pledge to the Indians in Kenya. He pursued a policy of continuity, following the path set in Kenya by the Duke of Devonshire. His main contribution was to set up various commissions to examine the problems of Africa but he made no attempt to ensure that the views of the A.C.I.Q. would be the main ideas examined. The commissions were nicely balanced to ensure there was no domination by people the settlers might regard as 'extremists'. Thomas chose as the Labour representative for the Commission which visited East Africa, Major Church who had no expert knowledge or great interest in African affairs. When the Commission eventually reported, during the next Conservative administration, Major Church was full of praise for the white settlers of East Africa. The result of this was that anyone who criticised the settlers, such as Leys or Ross, was regarded in official circles as a 'dangerous extremist'.

In Cabinet, Thomas argued against redeeming Wedgwood's pledge about the abolition of the communal franchise in Kenya. In Parliament, Thomas emphasised the need to preserve continuity in colonial policy with the Conservatives. The problem was that if Labour was going to implement the A.C.I.Q. policy, there was need for some discontinuity.

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1. E.A. Brett, op.cit., pp.180-1.

This applied particularly in Kenya where the interests of the white settlers were paramount. In order to implement the policy of making African interests paramount, the settlers would have been forced tolose the many privileges they possessed compared to the Africans. No attempt was made by Thomas to reduce the privileges of the settlers.

Thomas's major interest seemed to be to go round the country and the empire making speeches trying to reassure the middle classes that Labour meant no harm to the empire. At the British Empire Exhibition, he declared that 'nothing is more mistaken than the idea....that Labour is hostile to the Empire and the imperial idea.'[1] Thomas was very proud of the empire and the British Constitution which had enabled him to come from humble beginnings as an engine cleaner to become a Cabinet Minister. He did not seem to be aware that in many parts of the empire, particularly, in Africa, the Labour Government was presiding over a system which did not provide social justice for the Africans. Yet he himself had outlined the A.C.I.Q.'s policy in a book ironically entitled 'When Labour Rules'.[2] When Thomas did rule as he himself carefully pointed out, the contents of this book were ignored.[3] The Labour A.C.I.Q. policy statement was re-issued in 1926 and Thomas wrote a foreword. However, he did not discuss what he had done to put the policy into effect when he had been Colonial Secretary. The statement completely ignored his period at the Colonial Office because little had been achieved.

It could be argued that Thomas's task was particularly difficult because the Government was in a minority and it was the first Labour Government of all time. He had

1. The Times, 9 August 1924.
2. J.H. Thomas, 'When Labour Rules' (London, 1920)
3. see above p.129,interview with 'Joh n Bull',3I May I924.

proved that a Labour Colonial Secretary could rule the empire as well as a Conservative Colonial Secretary. However, if a Labour Colonial Secretary was going to pursue the same policies as a Conservative Colonial Secretary, there was little point in having a Labour Colonial Secretary. Thomas's failure to make any progress in implementing the policy of the A.C.I.Q. has also been explained[1] by stating that the A.C.I.Q. policy was not official Labour policy in 1924, but, as has been pointed out, the A.C.I.Q. policy had been outlined by Wedgwood in the Commons as Labour policy, and Thomas himself had declared that it was what the Labour party would do when it ruled. Another explanation that could be advanced for Thomas's lack of achievement is that the Labour Government was only in power for under a year and dependent on Liberal support. However, the Labour A.C.I.Q.'s policy had support among the Liberals. Buxton and Morel were ex-Liberals who still supported many Liberal principles such as freedom of trade, international supervision and individual rights. Labour policy was mainly concerned with trying to apply these principles to Africa. Leys stated that his main aim was to apply Liberal principles to the African colonies.[2] The policy of the A.C.I.Q. did owe a lot to Liberal principles and there is no indication from Cabinet papers that Thomas felt restrained by the Liberals. Liberal M.P.s such as J.H. Harris,[3] were strongly committed to improving the position of the African vis-a-vis the settlers. It was the Liberal member of the East Africa Commission, Linfield, who wrote a dissenting report critical of the settlers in East Africa. The point about the shortage of time has validity, but it seems extremely doubtful from the

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1. J.H. Mower, op.cit.
2. Leys to Harris, 31 December 1919, A.S.A.P.S. Papers, G141.
3. He later joined the Labour party.

speeches of Thomas in Parliament, in the country and in the Cabinet, and by his refusal to accept Morel as a private secretary, that he would have pursued different policies, even if the Labour party had possessed a large majority over all the other parties. Thomas was not the right choice if the Labour party was determined to enforce the policy of ensuring that the interests of the Africans were made paramount in East Africa. He seemed more suited as Colonial Secretary in the Conservative-dominated National Government, which he later became.

Labour's second Colonial Secretary was Sidney Webb, who became Lord Passfield to take over the Colonial Office. Passfield had begun his career as a civil servant in the Colonial Office and was one of the main 'intellectuals' of the Labour movement. He had been responsible, with Henderson, for drafting 'Labour and the New Social Order' which had committed the party to democratic socialism. Passfield had also been instrumental in setting up the Labour party's advisory committees after the war. In theory, Passfield appeared to be a more promising choice as Colonial Secretary than Thomas but, in practice, he was to prove just as disappointing. As Leonard Woolf points out in his memoirs,[1] Lord Passfield had never shown much interest in foreign or colonial affairs and, as has been shown above, Passfield and his wife did not hold a very high opinion of Africans.

However, Gregory[2] has interpreted Passfield's period of office as a moderately successful one, but this interpretation was made without the benefit of Cabinet papers which present a different picture. Gregory thinks that

1. L. Woolf 'Downhill All the Way' (London, 1967), p.238.
2. R.S. Gregory, 'Sidney Webb and East Africa', (Berkeley, 1962).

Passfield had reasonable success because he reformed the colonial office structure, passed the Colonial Development Act, abandoned the Conservative scheme for Closer Union in East Africa which would have given the settlers more powers, and issued a progressive 'White Paper on Native Policy'. The reform of the Colonial Service may have been due to Lord Passfield because he was very keen on achieving 'socialism' by administrative reforms but Kenneth Robinson has pointed out that the effect of this reform was to make it more difficult for Africans to achieve posts in the Colonial Service.[1] The Colonial Development Act was a Conservative measure, which Passfield put into effect. Its main purpose was not to hasten the economic development of the African colonies but to try to alleviate unemployment in Britain and it made no great impact on the economic development of African colonies.[2] The main area of controversy was over the question of closer union in Africa and here, in contrast to what Gregory states, Passfield was very willing at first to implement a plan favourable to the settlers which had been recommended by his Permanent Secretary, Sir Samuel Wilson. After seeing Passfield, Grigg, the Governor of Kenya, was convinced that the settlers would be given more powers in Kenya. Passfield presented a paper to Cabinet advocating this.[3] However, Passfield was defeated in Cabinet, mainly due to the efforts of Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, who was trying to safeguard the interests of the Indians in Kenya.[4] When the

1. K. Robinson, 'Dilemmas of Trusteeship' (London, 1965) pp.43-5.
2. E.A. Brett, op.cit., p.133.
3. See above Chapter 6 and Gupta, op.cit., pp.196-199.
4. Gregory underestimates the influence of Wedgwood Benn, placing toomuch reliance on B. Webb's Diaries.

Government's White Paper on Closer Union was eventually issued, Grigg and the settlers were dismayed to find that the views of the Secretary of State had changed. This was due to opposition in Cabinet and vigorous lobbying by the members of the A.C.I.Q., the A.S.A.P.S., and Lord Lugard and the Rev. Oldham. These pressures had forced Passfield to change his plan for abandoning the offical majority in the Kenyan Legislative Council. As well as the abandonment of this plan, the settlers in East Africa were dismayed at Passfield's 'White Paper on Native Policy',[1] which closely followed the A.C.I.Q. policy on colonial affairs. Passfield had consulted C.R. Buxton and Brockway when he was drawing up this paper. It emphasised that the interests of the Africans should be paramount over the white settlers and the Indians in East Africa, and outlined the policies which should be pursued to achieve this aim. The members of the A.C.I.Q. were very pleased, and hoped that progress would be made towards implementing this White Paper. However, Passfield showed no great enthusiasm for the policies advocated in his White Paper. In Cabinet, he had stated that he had written the White Paper mainly to placate the pressure groups who were pressing for the Africans' interests.[2] The settlers were not to know this and were very angry when the 'Black Papers' as they called them were published.[3]

The problem was that although Passfield had set out Labour party policy, he made no great effort to ensure that it was implemented. Like Thomas, he did not implement the Labour party's policy in detail. He made radical sounding statements but did not follow them up, instead, he set up the

1. Cmd. 3573.
2. C.P. 308 (29)
3. M. Perham, 'East African Journey' (London, 1976)

Joint Committee on Closer Union to decide policy for him. Members of the A.C.I.Q. lobbied Passfield in the House of Lords to try to persuade him to insist upon a revision of the East African budgets in favour of the Africans; but Leonard Woolf writes that Lord Passfield had 'at his fingertips' all the arguments for doing nothing.[1] This made Woolf, the secretary of the A.C.I.Q., wonder whether there was any point in the committee working out policies for the Labour party if nothing was done about them when the party achieved office. Other members of the A.C.I.Q. felt the same. McGregor Ross wrote, soon after Passfield had been appointed, that 'Passfield has been a great disappointment and anxiety to the Labour party.'[2] He hoped that Passfield would improve over time. However, he was to be disappointed; in 1935 he wrote that a 'proper socialist Colonial Secretary' would have given the settlers 'a time-notice and frogmarched them off the land - substituting state operations.'[3] Leys was so disillusioned with Passfield's performance that he resigned from the A.C.I.Q. to write another book to publicise the plight of the Africans in East Africa. He thought that Passfield was surrounded in the Colonial Office by people who hated Labour party policy and that Passfield preferred to listen to them rather than the Labour party experts.[4] Leys wrote in 1939 that the Labour Government of 1929-31 left 'no mark on colonial policy'.

These accounts of Passfield's tenureship may have been partial, but even his 'second-in-command' at the Colonial Office, Drummond Shiels felt disappointed with the leadership

1. L. Woolf, op.cit., p.238.
2. Ross Papers, Ross to Northey, 26 December 1929.
3. ibid., Ross to Owen, 19 March 1935.
4. Leys to Harris, 8 November 1929, A.S.A.P.S. Papers A.C.I.Q. Memo No. 205, February 1939.

of Passfield. He believed that Passfield was moving too slowly.[1] The civil servants at the Colonial Office were not dedicated to the settlers' interests; they accepted the policy of trusteeship[2] but they were determined to move at a slow pace, particularly, the Permanent Secretary, Sir Samuel Wilson. The senior civil servants at the Colonial Office felt that members of the A.C.I.Q., particularly Leys, were 'dangerous extremists' whose advice should be treated very sceptically. Passfield seemed to feel happier with the advice of his senior civil servants than that provided by the A.C.I.Q. Shiels and some of the younger civil servants, however, may have been prepared to follow a slightly more radical course. A study of Colonial Office minutes shows that the senior civil servants were continually advising caution and care and were against any policy of 'head on' confrontation with the white settlers in East Africa. The civil servants also upheld the status quo in West Africa, which, during Passfield's period of office, was not the haven of peace and prosperity which it appeared to be from Labour party policy statements. There were many riots and demonstrations during this period and, on several occasions, force was used to contain the demonstrations.[3] Passfield appeared eager to commend the officers involved in these incidents, but Drummond Shiels advised more caution and wanted to find out the facts before issuing commendations. Inquiries sometimes found that the military had been too eager to use force, particularly, in the case of the Aba riots. Passfield seems to have been more willing to uphold the use of force against African demonstrators than might have

1. D. Shiels in M. Cole, ed. 'The Webbs and their work', (London, 1948)
2. Lee 'Colonial Development and Good Government' (Oxford, 1967)
3. See Chapter 7 above.

been expected from a Labour Colonial Secretary, who was concerned to see that justice was done in the colonies.

Passfield's period of office was a great disappointment to those in the Labour party who were concerned to see that the party upheld the pledge to make African interests paramount. The policy of trusteeship was a tenable one if it was pursued vigorously with a real effort to ensure that the Africans were being prepared for self-government but Passfield failed to do this. His tenureship of the Colonial Office was characterised by delay and vacillation. Like Thomas, he preferred to set up Committees rather than to make decisions to implement Labour's policy. Radical African leaders such as Kenyatta were not allowed to appear before the Joint Committee on Closer Union, neither would Passfield receive them. However, Drummond Shiels did receive Kenyatta to point out to him that the Africans should pursue the constitutional path to reform as the Labour party had done in Britain,[1] but it could have been pointed out to Shiels that the constitutional path did not seem to be achieving very much as far as colonial affairs were concerned. When the second Labour Government fell, the settlers were still secure in East Africa. Land, labour, education and taxation policies put the interests of the white settlers above those of the Africans. There was still discriminatory legislation in existence in the African colonies. In Southern Rhodesia, Passfield had approved such legislation in respect of land.[2] In West Africa, the Africans were still dominated by 'capitalist' combines and the 'landlordism' of the African chiefs. All that can be said is that the Labour Government prevented the settlers

1. J. Murray-Brown, 'Kenyatta' (London, Fontana ed. 1974)p.122.
2. Which has only just been repealed in March 1977.

from becoming more powerful in East Africa, but this was not due to Passfield. Although the settlers were furious when the White Papers were published, they were relieved that they were not fully implemented and became the 'obiter dicta' of a minority government, as Grigg later wrote.[1]

In defence of Passfield and the Labour Government, it could be said that the Government did not have an absolute majority and was dependent on Liberal support. It could also be pointed out that Britain was in the midst of a world wide depression which made people think that Britain could not devote much resources or energy to the problems of the African colonies. However, as has been pointed out when Thomas was the Colonial Secretary, there is little to indicate that the Liberals would have been against the Labour party's policy if there had been an attempt to implement it. On the contrary, many Liberals were urging the government to be firmer in implementing its commitments.[2] The point is that the will was lacking. The same lack of will and determination to implement policies was shown on the domestic front. The Labour party failed, with greater consequences for itself, on economic policy. The Labour Chancellor, Philip Snowden, was more orthodox than the Treasury. Radical ideas such as those put forward by Keynes and Mosley were ignored, as radical ideas on colonial policy had been ignored. Again, the Liberals would have supported a more radical economic policy: the Liberal party had included a policy of public works as part of their programme.

Labour's leadership during the interwar period was very orthodox on economic policy. D. Marquand[3] shows in his

1. Lord Altrincham (Sir Edward Grigg) Kenya's Opportunity (London,1955)
2. See Chapter 6.
3. D. Marquand, 'Ramsay MacDonald' (London,1977) Chapter 23.

biography of MacDonald that it was not only MacDonald who was sceptical of public works but the entire Labour Cabinet. The Labour leadership lacked radical ideas about what to do in office. Although they expressed high ideals in their speeches, when they were in office they had no great determination or idea of how to turn their ideals into reality. There were alternative policies available on economic affairs and colonial affairs but the leadership chose the policies which were presented to them by their civil servants rather than those proposed by radicals such as Mosley and Leys. As Marquand points out, the Labour party was 'shot through, often without its realising the fact, with assumptions derived from the social order against which it was in revolt'.[1] During the interwar period the Labour party had a ready made excuse for its failure to achieve anything in office. It was because it was dependent on the Liberals. In reality, this disguised the fact that the leadership had no great desire or idea of how to achieve anything radical. Radical advice was regarded as unsound and inappropriate to the circumstances. The Labour party was unwilling to critically examine the roots of a problem and work out detailed policies which would have led to root-and-branch change. It preferred instead to rely on vague rhetoric, which, when tested, turned out to have little substance.

Labour's lack of determination to pursue policies which would have made a difference to the power structure applied equally at home, and in the colonies. A determined attempt to redistribute resources from the middle classes to the working classes at home and from the settlers and combines to the Africans in the colonies might have led to opposition in Parliament. The point is that no such attempt was made

1. ibid., pp.794-795.

and the ministers concerned did not give the impression that they would have followed more radical[1] policies to cure unemployment at home and ensure African interests were paramount in the colonies, even if they had had a good working majority in Parliament.

An additional difficulty in implementing colonial policy was the distance that the minister was from the colonies. The Colonial Office had the problem that it was far removed from Africa and it took time for communications to reach Africa and replies to return. The Colonial Secretary depended for information, and the implementation of his policy, on the 'men on the spot' - the administrators in the colonies. However, as Drummond Shiels, pointed out, some of these people were looking for a firmer lead from London than they received from Lord Passfield. Also Passfield could have been more determined to replace people who did not follow the instructions of the Colonial Office. Governor Grigg of Kenya frequently had arguments with Passfield because Grigg was very sympathetic to the European settlers; but Passfield did not recall him, despite suggestions from Drummond Shiels that he should do so. It was obvious that as long as Grigg was Governor of Kenya, no moves would be made to ensure that African interests were made paramount. One would have expected a Labour Colonial Secretary to make sure that the Governors were people who would put African interests to the fore - as all parties had stated this was their policy. Passfield was too willing to accept things as they were, instead of making a vigorous effort to change them.

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1. Radical is taken here, and throughout the thesis, to mean affecting the foundation or going to the root of a problem - root-and-branch change or reform. (Oxford Dictionary).

Gupta concludes his discussion of Passfield's period at the Colonial Office by stating that 'in the tussle between principles and expediency principles won.'[1] This conclusion is somewhat different from that of the members of the A.C.I.Q. who thought that Passfield, although he had outlined Labour principles, had not done enough to ensure that they were put into practice. It seems, to the present writer, that during Passfield's period at the Colonial Office Labour principles were not carried out, there was no determined attempt to implement the White Paper of 1930. No extra resources were devoted to African education in order to train the Africans for independence. The position of the African did not improve during Passfield's tenureship. The white settlers still maintained all their privileges over the Africans. Although Passfield was pressed tomake greater efforts to implement the White Paper, he showed no sense of urgency. It seems that under Passfield, as under Thomas, expediency was the main determinant of Labour policy at the Colonial Office. As Leonard Woolf wrote, Lord Passfield, as Colonial secretary, displayed a 'masterly inactivity' whenever an opportunity arose to do something different from what Conservative Governments and the Colonial Office civil service had endorsed as safe, sound and 'progressive' for the last half-century.'[2] Woolf concludes,correctly in the opinion of the present writer,that despite all the difficulties the Labour Governments faced in the interwar period, both Thomas and Passfield failed to carry out Labour's 'promises in cases where they could and should have done so.'[3]

Drummond Shiels was a member of the A.C.I.Q. and did

1. Gupta, op.cit., p.200
2. L. Woolf, op.cit., p.237.
3. ibid., p.236.

make some effort to implement the party's policies but he was dismayed by Passfield's conservatism. However, Drummond Shiels did start work in the Colonial Office to help develop proper trade unions in the African colonies, but this work had only just begun when the Labour Government fell, and the Conservative Government did not put so much emphasis on it. Nevertheless, the Labour movement did follow the question up and the British trade unions began to take an interest in the colonies in the 1930s. The trade unionists, in particular, Ernest Bevin, were worried that if the African colonies began to industrialise, they might provide competition for Britain, as a result of the low wages that were paid to the African workers. Therefore, in order to prevent undercutting of British wages, the T.U.C. formed its own colonial committee, to advise African trade unionists and help the Africans to develop trade unions. The committee, which was largely staffed by members of the A.C.I.Q., provided model rules for African trade unions.

In Parliament during the 1930s Creech Jones, a trade unionist, became very active on behalf of the Africans. He asked many questions and conducted a great deal of correspondence on behalf of the Africans, trying to deal with their grievances. He was a member of the A.C.I.Q. and was provided with information and help from the other members of the A.C.I.Q. particularly C.R.Buxton, McGregor Ross and Norman Leys.[I] It was these people who were responsible for the Labour party's 'good reputation' on colonial matters between the wars and not the leadership or the Colonial Office Secretaries of State.

After the war, Creech Jones became the Colonial Secretary. He was a better choice than the other Colonial Secretaries had been and he did make an effort to try to

I. Leys was a former member but he kept sending memos and later attended again.

implement the policy that Labour had worked out in the inter-war period but the problem was that by the end of the second world war, the policy that had been appropriate in the early 1920s was becoming dated. By 1945, there was need for some urgency in the preparations for self-government for the African colonies and also for resources to be devoted to the economic development of the colonies. As Fenner Brockway points out, the war had given experience of wider horizons to Britain's colonial subjects: 'they had fought for democracy; they gave themselves...to its achievement in their homelands',[1] after the war. The sixth Pan-African Congress was held in Manchester in 1945. For the first time younger more determined African leaders were there - among them Kenyatta from Kenya, Nkrumah from the Gold Coast, Akintola from Nigeria, Johnson from Sierra Leone. As Basil Davidson states, the notion of 'European trusteeship' went 'neck and crop out of the window into the Manchester fog.'[2] The delegates declared; 'we demand for Africa autonomy and independence, so far, and no further, than it is possible in this One World for groups and peoples to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation...We are determined to be free, (but) if the Western world is still determined to rule Mankind by force, then Africans, as a last resort, may have to appeal to force in the effort to achieve freedom.'[3] The Africans were soon disappointed by Britain's unwillingness to move rapidly towards the acceptance of African independence and its unwillingness to provide much economic aid to the African colonies. Britain was not in a very good position to provide much economic help after the war, but many Labour

1. Fenner Brockway, 'The Colonial Revolution', (London, 1973),p.37.
2. B. Davidson, 'Which Way Africa?' (Penguin,3rd ed.)1971,p.66.
3. Quoted, ibid.

ministers gave no indication that they had much desire to help the Africans. Hugh Dalton, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was very reluctant to provide economic aid to what he later called 'the pullulating, poverty-stricken, diseased nigger communities.'[1] Bevin, Labour's Foreign Secretary, regarded the colonies in terms of Britain's self-interest, as sources of raw materials which could be used as a bargaining counter with the U.S.A. Neither of these two ministers was prepared to help the African colonies for the benefit of the Africans. If the interests of the Africans tied in with those of Britain, that was well and good but if they did not, Creech Jones had great difficulty in persuading the Labour Government to provide help. The major scheme of economic development, which was meant to be of mutual benefit to both countries, was the groundnuts scheme, but it ended in disaster.

The Labour Government and the Colonial Office were shocked out of their complacency towards the African colonies when riots broke out in the Gold Coast in 1948. This was a turning point, concessions had to be made. The Labour party began to realise that one of the factors in the situation which it had regarded as constant was now beginning to change. The Africans were no longer going to wait until 'London' decided that they were capable of 'good Government', they wanted self-government, whether it was 'good' or 'bad' in British eyes. The assumptions were beginning to change - a policy of slow progress to self-government was no longer appropriate. Self-government was something which would have to come in the fairly near future and not something which was generations away. However, as

1. Quoted, P.S. Gupta, op.cit., p.336.

Lee points out, it was not until the Conservative Colonial Secretary Iain Macleod grasped the nettle of independence that the assumptions of the Colonial Office civil servants really changed.[1]

The achievements of the Labour party in office as regards colonial policy were not great. During the inter-war period, although there were difficulties because of lack of time and lack of a parliamentary majority, the Labour Colonial Secretaries were disappointing because they showed no real effort or desire to implement a vigorous policy of trusteeship. After the war, the problem was that the policy Creech Jones was trying to implment was not completely relevant to the developing situation and the other ministers were reluctant to provide resources for the development of the African colonies at a time when Britain herself was in need of investment and development after the second world war.

The Labour party's record on colonial policy was disappointing from a democratic socialist point of view. The party made very little effort to carry out its policy between the wars and after the second world war, the Labour movement, as a whole, failed to pay much attention or provide much help to the African colonies. After the war, the Labour party failed to provide workable ideas on how to achieve economic development in the colonies before the transfer of power to the Africans. One of the main reasons for this was that this subject was neglected by the party in the interwar period. Gupta states that the Labour party abandoned a positive colonial policy to concentrate on building a 'socialist Britain' after the war.[2]

1. Lee, op.cit.
2. Gupta, op.cit., pp.391-392.

However, it appears to this writer that the Labour party's achievements in colonial policy are tied in with its achievements in domestic policy. During the interwar period, the Labour party failed to implement its programme in many areas- colonial policy was not the only area where its performance was disappointing. There were, as has been said many extentuating factors, but taking all these into account, the Labour ministers during the interwar period seemed to suffer from a lack of will, determination and belief in themselves. There were alternative policies to deal with unemployment and the colonies which would probably have gained the backing of the Liberal party but the Labour leadership did not seem interested in these ideas - MacDonald, Snowden, Thomas, Passfield, Clynes etc. seemed more concerned to follow the advice of their civil servants and keep to the well-trodden paths of conventional economic and colonial policy. There was an 'unwillingness 'to jettison cherished assumptions in the face of changing realities'.[1] This applies particularly to colonial policy.

After the war, the leadership had changed, and there was more determination to implement the party's policies. Creech Jones made more of an effort to implement a positive colonial policy but was defeated by the economic situation. The party, as a whole, during this 1945-51 Government made an effort to carry out the policies and programmes which had been worked out before the war in the 1930s. This was true of colonial policy as well as domestic policy. In domestic policy the party made an attempt to set up the 'welfare state' but in setting up the National Health Service, Bevan had to make many concessions to the doctors. The

1. D. Marquand, op.cit., p.795.

National Insurance Act was disowned by Beveridge in the House of Lords because it did not pay benefits at subsistence level. The nationalisation programme used the Morrisonian idea of the public corporation to run the industries with the result that, for the actual workers, there was little change. In imperial affairs other than Africa, the Labour Government gave independence to India with the result that there was widespread bloodshed and loss of life. The moral of this episode, for Africa, was that it was vital for the colonial power to devote resources to preparing colonies for independence. If countries were given independence without adequate preparation, there was likely to be bloodshed. By the 1940s it was too late to devote much time to preparation for Indian independence for the nationalist movements had become too vociferous; the time for the preparation had been the interwar period. This period was an opportunity missed as far as India was concerned and also as far as Africa was concerned.

The Labour Government of 1945-51 followed mildly reformist policies at home and abroad. The policies were mainly a response to the problems of the interwar period. When the Labour party had completed its programme it ran out of ideas about what to do next. This applied to colonial policy as well. When it became obvious, after the Gold Coast riots, that the colonial policy prepared in the interwar period was no longer appropriate, the party was at a loss to know what policy to pursue. The Labour party did not abandon colonial policy to achieve 'socialism' at home. As it ran out of ideas on colonial policy, so itwas also running out of ideas on domestic policy. The point is that leaders who are determined to change things will change them at home and abroad; and leaders who lack the will to

change society will not make any significant changes at home or abroad. The leaders of the 1945-51 Labour Government were not Marxian Socialists or even people who were dedicated to achieving 'clause 4' type of socialism but they were moderate reformers and they made moderate reforms at home and abroad, which did not basically change the nature of British society or colonial society. The exceptions were India and the Gold Coast where the Government was forced to make changes by nationalist pressure.

As Norman Leys wrote in the 1930s, 'only men and women with the audacity to challenge the existing social order in England will ever have the guts to do justice in Africa.' The only hope Leys had for Africa was 'a party that openly and determinedly does battle with the City and the Landed Aristocracy and Big Business.' He felt that if the Labour party was not that kind of party the Africans would only 'achieve justice' when they were 'ready to kill and be killed'.[1] There were links between the settlers in Africa and the landowners and aristocracy in England. If the Labour party had been prepared to redistribute resources in Africa towards the Africans, it would have had to fight the middle classes, the landowners and the aristocracy in England. In the interwar period, the party avoided either struggle. After the second world war, the party did make more effort, but there was still no great redistribution of resources in England or the colonies.

The policy that the Labour party could have followed was that of Norman Leys, who was an expert on East Africa. It was people, such as Leys and Ross[2], who had lived in Africa

1. Leys to Harris, 17 July 1932, A.S.A.P.S. Papers, G145.
2. Leys and Ross were both strong Christians whose 'socialism' was based on Christianity not Marxism.

and realised the problems who pushed for a vigorous implementation of a positive colonial policy based on ensuring that equalrights were given to everyone in Africa. Leys' policy was not Marxist or particularly extremist but it would have meant that the British Government put more effort into carrying out its protestations that it was looking after the interests of the Africans and preparing them for independence. The policy would have meant the repeal of discriminatory legislation, taking some of the land from the white settlers and giving it back to the Africans, spending equal money on African education to white education per capita and spending more money on roads which benefited black communities instead of those which benefited white communities, and making taxation dependent on income so that the members of the white population would be taxed higher than the black Africans who on average earned much less than the whites.

Leys was also more sceptical of the policy of indirect rule than some members of the A.C.I.Q. He did not want the African to be dependent on chiefs, who were taking part in the British colonial administration, especially, in West Africa; Leys wanted the black Africans to be 'freed' from traditional African government as well as from white domination. This issue was by no means clearcut but Leys distrusted the policy of indirect rule because he believed that the most important point was to educate the black Africans so that they would not be dependent on white

settlers or African chiefs.[1] It was because the A.C.I.Q. attached so much importance to education that the members tried to persuade Passfield to force amendments in Colonial budgets so that more money would be spent on African education and, at least, the same per capita as was spent on white education. Very rapid progress to independence may have left the Africans dependent on the chiefs, but Leys did not advocate immediate independence. He was thinking in terms of about 20 years from the 1920s. If the policy of Leys had been followed in the 1920s and British Governments, Labour and Conservative, had practised what they preached about trusteeship, maybe British colonial rule in East Africa would have finished in happier circumstances. The problem was that Leys, Buxton, Ross, Woolf and the other members of the A.C.I.Q. saw the urgency of doing something about Africa but they could not convince the leadership of the Labour party that the question was one that required immediate attention. Although the A.C.I.Q. was very influential in formulating the 'official' policy they were not influential enough to affect 'real' policy as practised by the party leadership.

It could be said in defence of the leadership of the Labour party that they were only following the indifference

1. Leys's interpretation was open to the criticism that if power was taken away from the chiefs, the colonial power could be accused of destroying traditional societies. The problem was that if Africans were to be educated in Western civilisation, tribal notions would have to be discarded. If the Africans were not educated in Western civilisation, it would be very difficult for them to gain independence. Leys believed that tribal institutions and loyalties would have to be replaced by central institutions and a loyalty to the country as a whole. He thought that educated, young Africans should replace the tribal chiefs as the leaders of the African nations. One of the main problems for independent African leaders has been to make national loyalties greater than tribal loyalties. Parochial feuds have proved to be one of the main factors producing conflict in post-colonial African countries.

of the electorate on colonial problems, and also the indifference of the party as a whole.[1] The policies of the Labour Governments could be said to be 'democratic' in relation to the Labour party and 'democratic' in relation to the British people as a whole. However, this assumes that political parties do not have a duty to try and lead the public on issues, which, although not of immediate importance to the people of Britain, had great long term significance. There was surely a duty on the politicians, particularly politicians of a reformist party, which held itself up as a 'democratic socialist' party, to try to lead the British people into an understanding of the problems of the peoples of the colonies. As Woolf writes, the British people and the Labour party were 'profoundly and complacently ignorant' about what 'was happening in remote places, among strange people'.[2] This was particularly so with Africa. India was the imperial problem which attracted most attention during this period.[3] Those M.P.s who did spend time on the problems of Africa were sometimes rebuked by their constituents for neglecting the problems of the unemployed workers of Britain. Buxton's papers contain an example: 'Home First' wrote to the 'Brighouse and Elland Echo' to say: 'I do not think we sent a man to Parliament to spend all his time troubling his head about people who are many thousands of miles away. If our member will withdraw his head out of the clouds and get interested in something around

1. Leys wrote to Winifred Holtby that the facts that were so deeply interesting to them were 'damnably uninteresting to everyone in this country except about one in a million.' Leys to W. Holtby, 10 February 1931, W. Holtby Papers, Drawer 4, File 8.
2. L. Woolf, op.cit., p.223.
3. Even Brockway devoted most of his attention to India rather than Africa in the interwar period. Interview with Brockway, 24 July 1973.

here he will find something else of greater importance to talk about...our own district is in a sorry plight.'[1] Many people could not see any connection between the problems of Britain and those of the colonies and thought that the Labour party should direct its energies to solving Britain's problems before it thought about the colonies.

This lack of popular interest is also shown by the lack of attention paid to the problems of the African colonies at Labour party conferences during the interwar period. There was only one real debate on the party's policy towards the African colonies during this period in 1933, in which the speakers tried to explain to the conference the importance of the issue despite the lack of electoral interest.[2] The ordinary members of the Labour party played almost no part in the development of the party's colonial policy during this period. A study of colonial policy proves that, when most members of the party are not interested in a subject, policy can be made by very few people. This does not fit very well with the Labour party's own description of its policy-making processes. The Labour party believes itself to be a democratic body, which determines policy in a democratic manner, taking into account the wishes of the rank-and-file. This picture of the Labour party has been supported by Samuel Beer[3] who instances policies such as the nationalisation of iron and steel and the mines. Over these issues, the impetus for nationalisation came from the trade unions concerned. This really indicates that the trade unions were, and are,

1. Brighouse and Elland Echo, 24 December 1930.
2. See above pp.365-373
3. S.H. Beer 'Modern British Politics'(London,1965)

the strongest influence on the Labour party and are likely to achieve their aims because they can easily dominate party conference by block votes. The problem with colonial policy was that there was no section of the party that was really interested in the subject and made much contribution to the policy except the A.C.I.Q. The trade unions, as has been pointed out, did not show much interest until they became worried about undercutting. The I.L.P. showed some interest in the 1920s but mainly through the efforts of the same people who were on the A.C.I.Q. In the 1930s, the I.L.P. left the Labour party and was very critical of Labour policy, but its criticisms made no impact on the party. The Fabian Society was moribund for most of the interwar period and played no part as an organisation until the Fabian Colonial Bureau was set up in 1940, mainly due to the efforts of Rita Hinden. However, individual Fabians did make a contribution, particularly Leonard Woolf who was one of the main, if not the main, writer of the Labour party's policy. Lord Olivier, Lord Passfield and J.F.N. Green were also Fabians who made some contribution to colonial policy. Labour colonial policy was influenced by the Fabian idea of gradual reform rather than revolutionary change, but, in actual practice, under the guidance of Lord Passfield the reform was even more gradual than the policy statements implied. The politicians in the party were not very interested in colonial policy because it was of no electoral importance and the constituency parties also showed little interest - there were only a few constituency motions presented on colonial policy during this period.

General motions were sometimes sent in from the constituencies condemning imperialism but there was no

detailed policy worked out. The consistency with which conference condemned imperialism indicated that it might have accepted a more radical policy than that presented by the leadership. Although conference was not prepared to accept a policy of complete abandonment, during the war the constituencies did pass a motion moved by Haden Guest which urged moving faster towards self-government than the official policy. It called for the abolition of the colonial status, rapid democratisation in the colonies and rapid economic development under public ownership. It was the type of policy that might have been expected from a democratic socialist party. It was accepted by Noel-Baker, on behalf of the Executive, and referred to the Central Committee on Reconstruction which was already working on colonial policy.[1] This Committee was dominated by the experts of the A.C.I.Q. particularly Leonard Woolf, who were already revising the 1933 policy statement. The policy that was produced for the next conference in 1943, and put forward by the N.E.C., was just the 1933 policy slightly revamped. The 1942 Conference motion had been largely ignored. Nevertheless, Conference passed the N.E.C. motion. Although Conference might have accepted a more radical policy than the leadership presented, it was content with the leadership's policy.

As far as 'official' colonial policy was concerned, policy was made by a small group within the party organisation - the A.C.I.Q. These people had the expert knowledge that the other sections of the party lacked. In the case of colonial policy, the bureacracy took over the making of policy ; it was not made by the trade unions, the leadership, the constituencies, the I.L.P. or the Fabian Society

1. 1942 Labour Party Conference Report, pp.154-155.

but by a small group of individuals who had had experience of the colonies and were interested in colonial problems. The policy was eventually presented to conference but when it was presented, it was as, more or less, a fait accompli, not a discussion document. Conference accepted the policy because it did not have the knowledge or depth of experience to be able to offer detailed criticism. This seems to illustrate Michels thesis that in large mass parties where the masses are ignorant of the issues the bureaucracy takes over and makes policy for the masses.[1] However, the policy was eventually submitted to conference and, if conference had managed to work out its own policy, it is doubtful whether it would have been very different.

R.T. McKenzie in his work on British political parties[2] has argued, in contrast to Beer, that in actual practice the role of the Labour party conference is not much different from that of the Conservative party conference. In theory, he states, Labour is supposed to follow conference decisions but, in practice, when in office, Labour Governments have ignored conference. The Conservative leader is supposed to be responsible for working out policy him self but, in practice, the leader will pay some attention to the wishes of conference. McKenzie concludes that 'the distribution of power within the two parties is overwhelmingly similar.'[3] McKenzie's thesis has been subject to much criticism. Miliband has pointed out that a leader of the Labour party could not consistently follow policies which the conference rank-and-file disagreed with; that the members of each party are very different in ideals and

1. Michels, 'Political Parties' (New York, 1962)
2. R.T. McKenzie, 'British Political Parties' (London,1955)
3. ibid., p.582.

occupations; and the atmosphere and ideals of the two party conferences are completely different.[1] S. Rose has stated that McKenzie's division between the leadership and the conference is an oversimplification and that there are divisions within the leadership, party conference and the N.E.C. - the conflict may not be between the Parliamentary leadership and the conference but between different sections of the P.L.P., the N.E.C. and the party conference.[2] R. Rose[3] has pointed out that McKenzie has ignored the importance of the unions in the Labour party because at the time he was writing, the major unions supported the leadership. The block votes at party conference of the major unions have a very important influence on policy determination. When the major unions became more 'leftwing' in the late sixties and the seventies, the unions swung the party in a more 'leftwing' direction. During the 1974 Labour Government the major unions decided to back the Government.[4] Both Government and unions accepted the 'Social Contract' with the result that the Government was able to gain the support of party conference on the main issue of pay policy. Although McKenzie may have overstated his case, it does seem that the Labour party picture of a democratic conference deciding the policy of the movement which is then put into effect by the P.L.P. is not completely consistent with the facts. Conference appeared to play a bigger role during the interwar period because the party was in opposition for most of this period. It has mainly been when the party is in power that

1. R. Miliband 'Party Democracy and Parliamentary Government' Political Studies, 1959, pp.170-174.
2. S. Rose 'Policy Decisions in Opposition' Political Studies 1956,pp.128-38.
3. R. Rose, 'The Problem of Party Government' (London,1974) pp.340-344.
4. At least until the beginning of 1977.

a rift sometimes occurs between the Parliamentary Party and the party conference (apart from exceptions such as the issues of unilateral nuclear disarmament and the attempted revision by Gaitskell of clause 4). The original idea that the N.E.C. and Conference determined policy has now been repudiated by Harold Wilson who states in his recent book: 'one thing must be made clear. The prime minister and his Cabinet cannot be instructed by the N.E.C. or by Conference.'[1] Wilson seems to be arguing against the 1918 Labour Party Constitution and supporting McKenzie's thesis that it would be constitutionally wrong for a democratically elected government to be dictated to by an extra-parliamentary body such as a party conference.The Labour leadership in the seventies seemed to have decided that party conference could not tell a Labour government what to do.The problem was that party conference did not agree with the leadership's interpretation of the Labour party constitution.

During the interwar period,the Labour party leadership paid more lipservice to the idea that conference determined policy but concerning colonial policy the leadership and its advisory committees were the main determinants of policy not the party conference: when the party was in office ministers paid more attention to the civil service machine than the party advisory committees.The result was that the party's policies were 'toned down' by the civil service.The decision to follow the constitutional path was one reason for the Labour party's moderation,as Miliband,Coates and Howell have suggested.[2] The Labour party not only accepted the constitutional path but completely accepted the constitutional machinery that already existed - the

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1.H.Wilson,'The Governance of Britain' (London,1976) p.162.
2.Miliband,Coates,Howell,op.citations.

a rift sometimes occurs between the Parliamentary Party and the party conference (apart from the issues of unilateral nuclear disarmament and clause 4). The original idea that the N.E.C. and Conference determined policy has now been repudiated by Harold Wilson who states in his recent book: 'one thing must be made clear. The prime minister and his Cabinet cannot be instructed by the N.E.C. or by Conference.'[1] Wilson, here, is going against the 1918 Labour Party Constitution and supporting Mckenzie's idea that it would be constitutionally wrong for a democratically elected government to be dictated to by an extra-parliamentary body such as a party conference. The Labour leadership in the seventies seemed to have decided that party conference could not tell a Labour government what to do. The problem was that party conference did not agree with the leadership's interpretation of the Labour party constitution.

During the interwar period, the Labour party leadership paid more lipservice to the idea that conference determined policy but a study of colonial policy indicates that the leadership and its advisory committees were the main determinants of colonial policy not the party conference: when the party was in office the ministers paid more attention to the civil service machine than the party advisory committees. The result of this was that the party's policies were 'toned down' by the civil service. The decision to follow the constitutional path was one reason for the Labour party's moderation, as Miliband, Coates and Howell have suggested.[2] The Labour party not only accepted the constitutional path but completely accepted the constitutional machinery that already existed - the

1. H. Wilson, 'The Governance of Britain' (London, 1976) p.162.
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civil service, parliamentary procedure, the monarchy, the House of Lords and the accepted role of the Prime Minister that he should choose the other ministers by himself. This acceptance of the existing constitutional machinery and procedures was one of the main reasons for the failure of the Labour party to make any impression on colonial affairs during the interwar period. The two people MacDonald chose as Colonial Secretaries were not the best men for the job, they had no experience of or interest in colonial affairs. There were other people in the party such as Morel and Wedgwood who would have been more suitable choices and who would probably have made more effort to convert the Labour party's policy into practice. This cannot be proved but by their statements in the House of Commons and in their books there is a strong indication that they would have been more effective Colonial Secretaries than the two chosen. Wedgwood did try in Cabinet to make Thomas honour the pledges Wedgwood had given in the House of Commons. He was unsuccessful because he was not the departmental minister. Equally, there is no proof that if ministers had been democratically chosen, better ones would have been chosen but, as far as colonial affairs were concerned, no worse ones could have been chosen. One of the great problems with British Government is that people are often chosen to be ministers to deal with areas which they know very little about. This is supposed to be counterbalanced by the expert advice provided by the civil service but the civil service is likely to be committed to preserving the status quo or, at least, will put very carefully all the arguments against radical change. The position of a new minister has been vividly illustrated by the Crossman diaries. Crossman wrote on becoming Minister

of Housing, 'I realise the tremendous effort it requires not to be taken over by the civil service. My minister's room is like a padded cell, and in certain ways I am like a person who is suddenly certified a lunatic and put into this great, vast room, cut off from real life and surrounded by male and female trained nurses and attendants.'[1] Although Crossman may not be completely typical, he does give an indication of how a new minister feels on taking office. The pressures to conform to the civil service point of view must have been even greater during the early Labour Governments when the party was very unsure of itself and its ability to govern. Thomas and Passfield easily succumbed to the 'civil service embrace'. Malcolm MacDonald states that Passfield was 'too inclined to listen to the Colonial Office civil servants.'[2] The argument is not that the civil service was doing anything improper - the job of the civil service is to point out the difficulties and problems involved in new policies. However, if the minister is not really determined to put a policy into effect or does not know much about the subject, he may accept the difficulties that are presented to him and be content to follow civil service advice. As R. Rose puts it, 'a minister lacking objectives of his own....may settle down to becoming a selector or endorser of policies from the alternatives that his civil servants put before him.'[3] 'The civil servants, without regard to partisan implications, are likely to be biased against change until it occurs.'[4] One way of trying to reduce this problem is to appoint partisan advisers to provide the minister with an alternative source of advice to

1. R. Crossman, 'The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister', Vol.1 (London,1975),p.21.
2. Interview with Malcolm MacDonald, 21 August 1973.
3. R. Rose, op.cit., p.416.
4. ibid., p.418.

the civil service which is committed to ensuring that party policies are carried out. This has obvious difficulties for civil service morale and relations between the civil service and the advisers: the 1974 Labour Government's limited experiment in this field has not been very successful, largely because the advisers chosen were not 'high powered' experts and the civil service chose to ignore them. However, if Passfield and Thomas had taken some members of the A.C.I.Q. into government with them, these experts, who knew as much, if not more, about colonial policy than the civil servants, might have been able to ensure that the Labour ministers made a more determined attempt to implement the party's policy. Advisers committed to the party would have been particularly useful in colonial policy because there was great ignorance of this subject among the ministers chosen by MacDonald, and Labour leaders in general. Leys was sure that the civil service had 'hoodwinked' Thomas and Passfield.

The idea of appointing expert advisers was suggested to MacDonald after the first Labour Government by the International Advisory Committee which thought that, when next in office, the Labour party should make far-reaching changes, particularly at the Foreign Office. It was suggested that the Labour party should appoint an experienced member as the foreign Secretary's principal private secretary, ranking above the Permanent Secretary and the Labour Government should also be prepared, on grounds of policy, to change the Heads of Diplomatic Missions. The International Advisory Committee thought that this was necessary because of the 'absence of anyone in high positions in the Foreign Office or Diplomatic Services, who even remotely understands the mentality of labour.'[1] This could equally have applied to

1. Quoted, D. Marquand, op.cit., p.416.

the Colonial Office and the other departments. MacDonald was strongly against the idea. He wrote to Henderson that 'in essence this is the American system of the spoils to the victor with a vengeance, and is a complete reversal of all our ideas regarding the civil service...we would raise such a hornet's nest inside the Service that, so far from promoting efficient and loyal service, we would destroy both.'[1] MacDonald was not willing to change the normal constitutional relationship between ministers and their civil servants. He was firmly committed to maintaining the established way of doing things and did not seem to be aware that by doing so, he was making it more difficult for the party to achieve radical change, or, maybe, he did not want to achieve radical change.

A very low priority was attached to colonial policy when the party achieved office in the interwar period. It would appear that the leadership of the party wanted a colonial policy towards Africa, not to implement, but to help to give the idea that the Labour party was a serious party which had a policy for all the problems of British Government. Morel wrote that 'British Labour....with...the exception of the small socialist I.L.P. movement within it (was) a purely trade union manual labourers' movement seeking one thing and one thing alone - increased wages and betterment of industrial conditions. And the only influence since the war broke out which is 'intellectualising' in the international sense this vast mass of ignorance is the influence wielded by our small group.'[2] The story of the Labour party's colonial policy in the interwar period is that the A.C.I.Q. worked out a policy but they could not persuade the rest of

1. Quoted, ibid., p.417.
2. E.D. Morel to Count M. Monteglas, 24 May 1921, Morel Papers.

the party to treat it as a matter of urgency. One of the reasons for their failure may have been that the A.C.I.Q. itself was not a very representative group, mainly being a collection of middle class intellectuals, some of whom had come to the Labour party via the Liberal party, some of whom were Fabians and some of whom were I.L.P.members. They had no real power base in the Labour party or the country and may have alienated some Labour party members by their attitude of intellectual superiority which is evident in Morel's letter quoted above.

However, although there were special difficulties with colonial policy, especially towards Africa. where there was widescale ignorance of the situation and electoral apathy, it would not be correct to imply that it was only over colonial policy that the Labour party's record was disappointing; there was a general failure in all policy areas except in a few instances where one or two ministers, for example, Wheatley at Housing in 1924[I], achieved some success. The problem was that most of the Labour ministers were not thinkers at all, let alone very radical thinkers. They did not question conventional assumptions and try to examine problems anew to look at the roots of the questions. The Labour party's domestic and economic policies, as well as its colonial policy, were based on the traditional assumptions of British politics. In colonial policy, the Labour party did not really offer anything new, its policy was based upon 'trusteeship' which was accepted by the Conservatives, the Liberals and the civil service as the basis of British colonial policy. The only difference was that, in theory, Labour policy appeared to place more emphasis on the problems of the colonies and treat these problems with greater urgency, but,

I.Although some of the credit may have been due to N.Chamberlain,the previous Conservative minister.

in practice, there was a large amount of continuity. There were few divisions on Colonial Office votes during the inter-war period. The Labour party was easily integrated into the established political system in Britain. Cowling describes how the Conservative party leaders and the monarch were slightly wary of the Labour party after the first world war, but by 1924 they had come to realise that the Labour party would do 'no harm'[1] to the basic structure of British society. The same applied to the empire.

The main reason for this was, that in the interwar period the Labour party was unsure of itself, it had leaders who were not really sure what to do if they achieved office. The party did not have a parliamentary majority, and, in these circumstances it is not difficult to see why it accepted the conventional machinery of Government. It is not surprising that a few dozen inexperienced ministers failed to make any great changes in British society in the interwar period. Miliband et al. argue that by following the constitutional path the Labour party lost sight of its ideals. There appears to be some truth in this, but to accept this does not necessarily mean that the party should have 'taken to the streets' instead of working through parliament. Another course would have been possible, the course of reforming the traditional institutions of British government, which is something that might have been expected from a reforming party. On the issue of constitutionalism the Labour party appeared very reluctant to question the established way of doing things. It could have put forward a programme of reform of the civil service, the institution of party advisers, reform of the House of Commons and House of Lords and the electoral system. (It only started to make some

1. M. Cowling, 'The Impact of Labour 1920-24' (Cambridge, 1971).

moves so far as the latter was concerned because of Liberal pressure.) The main problem during the interwar period was a lack of will among the Labour leadership. This was a particular problem as far as colonial policy was concerned. There was the general problem of lack of electoral support but many of the Labour leaders failed to give a positive lead because they did not seem to know what they wanted to achieve. In the few instances where Labour ministers did have the will and determination, such as Wheatley and Henderson, there was some positive achievement, despite the party's weak electoral and parliamentary position.

The 'riding for a fall' ideas of Cripps and others had a point. The idea that the Labour party should have put forward its full programme and, if it had been defeated in Parliament, should have gone to the electorate to try to secure a full mandate, would have shown that the Labour party had some policies. The problem with the course adopted was that the Labour party appeared to be at a complete loss, trying to put forward traditional policies which many of its supporters did not believe in, at a time when traditional policies were not the remedy that was required.[1] Another difficulty was that the leadership gave no real indication that they had any alternative policies to pursue, or that they were irked by the limitations from which the interwar Labour Governments suffered. In the colonial field, Thomas and Passfield showed no determination to put the party's policy into effect and there was no sign that they would have pursued more positive policies if they had had a parliamentary majority. As D. Marquand writes the inter-war Labour party was 'all reach, and no grasp. It had high

1. R. Skidelsky, 'Politicians and the Slump' (London,1967).

ideals, but few ideas about how to put them into practice.'[1] The Labour party has always appeared more radical than it, in fact, was and is. Its leadership has always tended to accept the 'conventional wisdom' of the day rather than listen to radical critics. This was equally true of colonial policy as it was of domestic and economic policy.

This study of the Labour party's colonial policy between the wars does not support the Labour party's own picture of itself as a democratic socialist party determined to secure social justice for workers at home, and abroad in the colonies. Dæpite all the difficulties faced by the party, there seemed to be a basic lack of will and determination among the leadership to reform the African colonies in order to hasten progress towards self-government. It is true that not much could have been done in the brief period that the party was in office, but because no attempt was made to implement the policy in the 1920s and 1930s Labour policy, and the inter-party debate on colonial affairs, did not advance very far from the positions adopted in the 1920s. The result of this was that when Labour came to full power in 1945, its policy for Africa was not really relevant to the rapidly changing situation and, instead of Labour colonial policy determining events in Africa, Labour policy was continually being outstripped by events in Africa.

In the end, it was Iain Macleod, a Conservative Colonial Secretary, who decided that the African colonies were no longer worth holding on to. The Labour party did not play a very large part in dismantling the African empire. It seemed that all the efforts of the A.C.I.Q. in the interwar period and, later, the Fabian Colonial Bureau had been largely irrelevant.

1. D. Marquand, op.cit., p.795.

However, without the efforts of men like Norman Leys, McGregor Ross, Leonard Woolf, C.R. Buxton, E.D. Morel, Creech Jones and Josiah Wedgwood in the interwar period and, later, Rita Hinden and the Fabian Colonial Bureau and Fenner Brockway and the Movement for Colonial Freedom, public opinion might have been more determined to 'hang on' to the African colonial empire. The experts of the A.C.I.Q. did act as a pressure group for a more positive colonial policy and did show friendship to the emerging African leaders. Without the continual pressure of the A.C.I.Q. during the interwar years, the white settlers might have gained complete control in East Africa. The difficulties of decolonisation were immense, but the policy of the A.C.I.Q. did emphasise the need to prepare the Africans for independence by education and training. If its policies had been carried out, the Africans would have been better prepared for independence and, perhaps, some of the problems that have resulted could have been avoided. The Labour party's experts never advocated the precipitate and unprepared withdrawal from the colonies that had such disastrous consequences in the Belgian Congo, they advocated a policy of reform which would have prepared the Africans for independence as soon as possible. If the Labour party had made a more determined attempt to put this policy into effect during its periods of office before and after the second world war, the Africans would have been better prepared for self-government. The pragmatic evasions and hesitations of the leadership meant that, in the end, the Labour party's contribution to African colonial policy was less significant than it would have been if the party had followed the advice of radicals, such as Norman Leys and Josiah Wedgwood. Leys and Wedgwood did not accept the 'conventional wisdom' that trusteeship was the correct policy

but stated that the root of the problem was 'status' - Wedgwood and Leys advocated the policy of 'equal rights' instead of the policy of trusteeship with its overtones of superiority. Leys and Wedgwood also tried to ensure that the party lived up to its promises when in office, but the leadership, despite rhetoric about trusteeship, showed little concern to prepare the Africans for self-government or carry out its promises concerning the African colonies. The Labour party contained within it many different views concerning African colonial policy, but the party did not play as significant a role in the decolonisation of Africa as it might have done because its leadership distrusted unconventional thinkers and ideas. In its desire to convince the electorate and the civil service that it could govern Britain and the empire 'responsibly', the Labour leadership seemed to lose sight of the fact that it had promised to reform Britain and the empire.

The conclusion must be that the Labour party would have achieved more in African colonial policy if it had been more willing to question conventional assumptions. Over colonial policy as over other policies, the Labour party's radical rhetoric disguised the fact that its policies were not very well thought out and were largely based on conventional assumptions. The party's conventionality was shown even more clearly when it was in office than when it was in opposition. The 'official' policy was not as radical as the policy of Leys but even 'official' policy was not implemented. The Labour party failed to live up to its promises on African colonial policy. There were many contributing factors to this failure: - lack of electoral interest; civil service reluctance to contemplate

radical change;economic depression;lack of time; the fact that the Labour party never had a majority government in the interwar period; the difficulty of changing policies in far-distant places;the fact that the Governors and the civil servants in the African colonies were not very sympathetic to radical change; the intransigence of the white settlers in East Africa and the fact that the 'establishment' in Britain,as shown in 'The Times' leaders,had sympathy for the settlers;the fact that the A.C.I.Q.'s policy was rather vague and not completely coherent,particularly on economic development; the lack of influence of the A.C.I.Q. on the rank-and-file of the party and the willingness of the rank-and -file to follow the leadership over colonial policy; the desire to prevent chaos and massacre which might have resulted if they had proceeded too rapidly; the difficulties of establishing a viable political and economic structure in the African colonies; the electoral debacle of 1931 and the ensuing numerical weakness of the Labour party in Parliament in the thirties; the fact that the Labour party was in its 'adolescence' as a British political party and did not want to 'scare off' the voters by pursuing 'extremist' policies; the lack of trade union interest in the problem until the trade unions felt that jobs might be threatened; the more pressing international problem in the interwar years of Italian and German aggression; and the difficulty of achieving rapid change through parliamentary institutions. However,the major consideration seems to have been a lack of will among the leadership and many members of the party to achieve rapid reform of the African empire. Most of the Labour leadership and a majority of the ordinary party membership were largely

influenced by conventional ideas about Africa in the interwar period and did not regard the African as the equal, or even the potential equal, of the European. Those who thought differently never really managed to convince the rest of the party to follow their policies. However, it is only because of the efforts of men like Leys, Wedgwood, Ross and later Brockway, who were usually ignored by the leaders of the party, that the Labour party can claim to have an honourable record of concern for the welfare of Africans. The actual policy pursued by the party in office between the wars and, to a lesser extent, between 1945-1951 hardly justifies Mr. Ivor Richard's claim that the Labour party has an honourable record as far as Africa is concerned.

Creech Jones did secure more official party recognition than most of the African experts. He was made Colonial Secretary in the third Labour Government. However, the policy the A.C.I.Q. had worked out between the wars was no longer appropriate when Creech Jones tried to implement it. Creech Jones also had great difficulty in persuading the other ministers in the Labour Government of the importance of pursuing a positive colonial policy. The Labour party largely wasted the interwar period as far as African colonial policy was concerned because it was unwilling to abandon traditional British assumptions about Africa and the Africans.

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List of Abbreviations

A.C.I.Q.	Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions (Labour Party)
A.S.A.P.S.	Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society
B.C.L.C.	British Commonwealth Labour Conference
D.C.T.& E.E.O.	Demand for Colonial Territories and Equality of Economic Opportunity (Labour Party,1936)
D.O.R.A.	Defence of the Realm Act
F.C.B.	Fabian Colonial Bureau
H.C.Debs.	House of Commons Debates (Hansard Reports)
I.L.P.	Independent Labour Party
I.A.C.	International Advisory Committee (Labour Party)
I.L.O.	International Labour Office
K.C.A.	Kikuyu Central Association
L.R.C.	Labour Representation Committee
L.R.D.	Labour Research Department
L.S.I.	Labour and Socialist International
L.A.I.	League Against Imperialism
L.C.C.	London County Council
M.C.F.	Movement for Colonial Freedom
N.A.C.	National Administrative Council (of the I.L.P.)
N.E.C.	National Executive Council (of the Labour Party)
N.F.R.B.	New Fabian Research Bureau
N.K.T.W.A.	North Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association
P.L.P.	Parliamentary Labour Party
S.D.F.	Social Democratic Federation
S.S.I.P.	Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda
T.U.C.	Trades Union Congress
U.D.C.	Union of Democratic Control